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ISSN 0258 - 1744

Christian Orient

September
1993

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EDITORIAL

CHANGING VIEWS ON EPHREM — Koonammakkal Thoma Kathanar

CHRIST AND CHURCH: A EUCHARISTIC UNDERSTANDING
— Thomas J. Thumpeparampil O. F. M. Cap.

HUMANITY AND THE NATURAL WORLD IN THE SYRIAC TRADITION
— Sebastian Brock

BOOK REVIEWS, NEWS

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An Indian Journal of Eastern Churches for Creative
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September

Vol. XIV

No. 3

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Manuscripts and Book Reviews are to be sent to the **Managing Editor, Christian Orient Trust**, P. B. 1. Vadavathoor, Kottayam - 686 010, Kerala, India.

Annual Subscription: Rs. 45/-; Foreign : \$ 30/- or DM 50 by air mail. \$ 15/- or DM 30 sea mail.

Single Copy: Rs. 15 (in India); \$ 10 or the equivalent (abroad)

Editorial

A Theology for Christian Life

In Evagrius' *Chapters on Prayer* we read: "If you are a theologian you pray in truth; if you pray in truth you are a theologian". Sometimes theology might seem to have become too much detached from the real Christian way, from the life of faith, hope, love, mercy, humility, etc. There are so-called theologians who teach about sacraments but who do not themselves receive them. Some of them may take it up as a mere profession, a means of income, worldly fame, etc. As a result they preach with their words and with their deeds they deny what they teach. For them theologizing is only an intellectual gymnastics.

The above mentioned division between theology and real Christian way of life is indeed a scandal. How to bridge the apparent gulf between doing theology and living Christianity (= spirituality)? For an answer one has to look to Christian East consisting of Syriac, Coptic, Byzantine, Armenian, Ethiopic and Georgian traditions. It is return to the non-compartmentalized approach to theology. Once we turn to the patristic sources we can appreciate the all-inclusiveness and inter-relations of various branches of theology. There it is life-oriented and comprehensive. It is eminently positive in spite of some occasional aberrations and pitfalls.

No theologian is an onlooker; no believer is an observer; no Christian is an uncommitted outsider. Theology cannot be reduced to sociology; nor can spirituality be seen as psychology. That kind of reductionism is superficial, invalid, inadequate and redundant. Moreover, spirituality is no appendix to theology; nor is it anything ancillary or accidental to theology.

Contemplation, adoration, humility, love, mercy, etc go together with theology according to St Isaac of Nineveh. He speaks about a compassionate heart: "It is a heart on fire for the whole of creation, for humanity, for the birds, for the animals, for demons and for all that exists. At the recollection and at the sight of them such a person's eyes overflow with tears owing to the vehemence of the compassion which grips his heart; as a result of his deep mercy his heart shrinks and cannot bear to hear or look on any injury or the slightest suffering of anything in creation. This is why he constantly offers up prayer full of tears, even for the irrational animals and for the enemies of truth, even for those who harm him, so that they may be protected and find mercy. He even prays for the reptiles as a result of the great compassion which is poured out beyond measure - after the likeness of God - in his heart.¹

Theologizing led by intellectual scrutiny may fail to grasp the depth and breadth of authentic Christianity. Crossing the boundaries of time, place, language and culture, great spiritual masters are able to speak to every generation. St Isaac - an East Syrian - was appreciated for his saintly life and spiritual insight, even by the West Syrians. Thus a theological adversary of a heretical Church became a spiritual leader, friend and guide for the West Syrian monks! Later on Byzantine, Coptic, Ethiopic and Russian traditions took over Isaac inspite of the fact that he was a member of a Church which they considered to be heretic! So theology may give way to Christian spirituality at times. The case of Evagrius (+399) provides another such example. His works were condemned by the Greeks in 553; but those who are venerated as saints by the Churches which condemned him, used to follow the counsel of Evagrius. Origen became unacceptable at a later period; but Athanasius and

1. A. M. Allchin, ed., *The Heart of Compassion. Daily Readings with St. Isaac of Syria* (London 1989), p. 9.

the great Cappadocian Fathers followed Origen's footsteps! There is an unfortunate and unacceptable anomaly that calls for a reappraisal.

Perhaps, once we start speaking too much about God we may end up as fools, as St Ephrem warns those who presume to scrutinize divine realities and still know nothing about God and God's world:²

We shall not forget ourselves
And plunge headstrong into our God;
Let us measure our intellect
And let us balance our thought;
And let us know our knowledge:
How small and despicable it is,
To pry into the Knower-of-all!

It is not the investigators who approach God; but God is very close to the humble and simple ones having discernment. The theologian may claim to take the initiative in God-talk. But the simple people realize the bond of love between Creator and created and hence their being receptacles before divine initiative. Nobody can track down God. But everybody can see the imprints of God in His creatures. These are sign-posts for believers who do not presume to trace out God on their own terms:³

If the creatures depend on Him
How can they be far away from Him?
Far away is His nearness;
Near is His far-awayness;
He is far away, though very near;
Who is able to describe Him?

The dynamic and paradoxical tension emerging from the ontological chasm between Creator and creatures should not be forgotten in our God-talk. When God is manifest He is hidden; when He is hidden He is manifest. Hiddenness does not exclude manifestation, and manifestation itself includes hiddenness. Hence there is always a scope for speaking about God – not because we are able to do so, but because He has erected sign-posts all around us – but always in a human way. There is really something that lies beyond and behind these sign-posts:⁴

You are entirely a wonder,
From whatever side we seek You!
You are near, but far away,
And who can arrive at You?
Scrutiny is not able to reach You
In its stretching out.
As it stretches itself out to reach You,
It breaks itself and recedes.
It is shorter than Your range.
But faith arrives at You;
Also, love together with prayer.

Blunt rationalization of divine realm leads to secularization of the sacred. A secularized theology is no theology worth its name. Theology and mysticism should go together. The rule of faith and the rule of prayer are to be in essence one and the same. Whenever and wherever we find them separate we cannot detect authentic Christian way of life. But we hope that Christian Orient can contribute towards discovering the true Christian life. Our special thanks to the contributors and to *Sobornost* in particular.

2. HdF 15:3.

3. SdF II:709-714.

4. HdF 4:11.

Changing Views on Ephrem*

Introduction

Twentieth century has inaugurated a revolution in the study of the early Christian literature traditionally called Patrology. This has universally affected the theological thinking of our times; and this will continue to influence our theologization beyond the defined periphery of various churches. It has started reforming the outlook of Christianity at large. The study of the Fathers of the Church has produced some of the contemporary theologians of great repute. Well-known patristic scholar and Russian theologian Florovsky is only an example of that group.

Since the study of patristic theology is still in its infancy, a student of patristics has to be very careful not to be led astray by the occasional unscholarly opinions of great scholars. The stray opinions of even these great patristic theologians could easily be discarded especially when they depend exclusively on secondary sources. Sometimes such opinions could just be their bias having no basis in primary sources. This points towards the crucial signi-

ficance of the use of primary sources and the danger of wrong conclusions based on secondary sources and personal prejudices.

Primary sources of early Christian studies had so long been thought to be consisting of Greek and Latin patristics. This wrong perception was perpetuated by J. P. Migne's edition of Greek and Latin patristic sources. Quasten's manual of patrology just neglected the entire Syriac theological world. In 1990 a theology student of the University of Oxford asked me about the field of my specialization. When he was told that it is Ephrem he did not believe at first that there is such a Church Father. He had to be told that to complement the patrology of Quasten one has to go through the *Patrologia Syriaca* of Ortiz de Urbina. The two poles of Christian tradition is infact too inadequate to impart a comprehensive view of patristic sources. With the continuing publication of the Syriac patristic literature a tripartite approach to early Christian theology has become necessary.¹ Theologization has yet to take up the study

* Paper read at the International Scholarly Congress for the 75th Anniversary of the Pontifical Oriental Institute Rome, 30 May-5 June 1993.

1. See my "Early Christian Monastic Origins. A General Introduction in the Context of the Syriac Orient", *Christian Orient* 13 (1992), pp. 139-142; idem, "An Ecclesiology in the Syriac Tradition", in *Communion of Churches*, ed., X. Koodapuzha (Vadavathoor 1993), pp. 129-130; M. Hollerich, "Arthur Vööbus Remembered", *Aram* 1:2 (1989), pp. 290-293; S. Brock, "Christians in the Sasanian Empire: A Case of Divided Loyalties", in his *Syriac Perspectives on Late Antiquity* (London 1984), art. IV, pp. 1-3.

of this new dimension. "But the tripartite tree of the Church bringing in the third force is indeed an alternative to the two-piece understanding of Christianity".²

Ephremic Studies

Since we are unable to deal with the tripartite approach to patristics in great detail we shall try to concentrate on the changing perspectives of patristic scholars on a particular poet-theologian namely St. Ephrem the Syrian (c. 306-373). "There is an increasing interest among Syriac and patristic scholars in Ephrem's works fostered very much by Dom Beck's (+12th June 1991) edition, translation, monographs and articles. One can rightly speak of a pre-Beck and post-Beck era in Ephremic studies."³ But it is at the same time very interesting to study the opinions of scholars on Ephrem in the pre-Beck era.

Pre-Beck Views on Ephrem

1. Florovsky

It is only some sixty years ago Russian theologian and well-known patristic scholar wrote on Ephrem: "He is least significant as a thinker... The most important of Ephrem's writings which have come down to us are his commentaries on the Bible... Ephrem's writings contain many outstanding images, but few original

ideas".⁴ After dealing with the Cappadocian Fathers in great detail, in just seven and half pages Florovsky dismissed Ephrem with some ill-informed comments typical of the first half of this century. Florovsky wrote this in 1930s and it is quite understandable in the pre-Beck era when the first critical edition of Ephremic corpus by Beck was yet to appear. But in a 1987 English translation of Florovsky one expects at least a footnote on Florovsky's chapter on Ephrem. Otherwise Florovsky's ill-informed comment would be perpetuated among non-Syriacists whereas Syriac patristic scholars would no more be able to appreciate such unscholarly views on Ephrem. Most of the original works of Ephrem seem to have been unknown to Florovsky and his views on Ephrem are formed by the ignorance of primary sources. Today no serious student of patristics will agree with Florovsky's unscholarly opinions on Ephrem. Unlike what Florovsky says Ephrem is "a religious philosopher in his own right".⁵ The most important works of Ephrem are his hymn cycles and not his commentaries on the Bible.

2. F. C. Burkitt

Burkitt, indeed one of the greatest Syriac scholars of the first half of our century, gave an even sorrier description: "What has given S. Ephraim his magnificent reputation is hard to say... (Ephrem's) works are excessively voluminous and well preserved. But

2. My "The Church in the Churches: A Syriac Ecclesiological Perspective", *Christian Orient* 14 (1993), p. 35.
3. My "Divine Names and Theological Language in Ephrem", *Studia Patristica* 25 (in print), p. 318.
4. G. Florovsky, *The Eastern Fathers of the Fourth Century* (The Collected Works VII, Vaduz 1987), pp. 268.274.
5. See my *The Theology of Divine Names in the Genuine Works of Ephrem* (DPhil Thesis, Oxford 1991); idem, "Divine Names and Theological Language in Ephrem", p. 318.

it is a weary task, gleaning the grains of wheat among the chaff. Ephraim is extraordinarily prolix, he repeats himself again and again, and for all the immense mass of material there seems very little to take hold of. His style is as allusive and unnatural as if the thought (were) really deep and subtle, and yet when the thought is unravelled it is generally commonplace... (Ephrem's poetry is) not... beautiful or inspiring... judged by any canons that we apply to religious literature, it is poor stuff..., it shows the lamentable standard of public taste... (Ephrem's theology) is out of touch with reality; it gives us neither the historical Christ, nor the Christianity of the Early Church, nor yet the clearly defined doctrines of post-Nicene times".⁶ Burkitt's scathing criticism is too long to be cited here fully.

Most of Burkitt's comments would fit very well with the six volume Assemani edition he used, rather than with the real Ephrem. Anyone who looks for 'clearly defined doctrines' in Ephrem will naturally be frustrated and this is what happened to Burkitt. But now a days no serious student will look for any 'clearly defined doctrines' in Ephrem. Definition of doctrines was fundamentally opposite to Ephrem's method of theologizing. Burkitt could not think of a non-Greek, non-Latin approach to early Christianity and hence he failed to appreciate the real greatness of Ephrem both as a poet and as a theologian. To have looked for 'historical Christ' in Ephrem's writings is only a late nineteenth century blunder. Burkitt tried to apply his Victorian canons to Ephrem's poetry. His Victorian bias failed to find any inspiration and beauty in Ephremic literature. The 'lamentable standard of public taste' to which

Burkitt connects Ephrem's 'magnificent reputation' is hardly an explanation at all. Nor does it do justice to one of the greatest poet theologians Christianity has ever produced.

3. J. B. Segal

Only two decades ago Segal wrote: "As a writer Ephraim was exceptionally prolific... Ephraim was acquainted with the work of Greek philosophers, but possibly little with that of Greek theologians... Of Syriac style, however, he was a master, and he earned eulogies that were bestowed on him in his own day and shortly afterwards—Prophet of the Syrians, Lion of Syria, Harp of the Holy Spirit, Pillar of the Church. His work, it must be confessed, shows little profundity or originality of thought, and his metaphors are laboured. His poems are turgid, humourless, and repetitive... But Ephraim's writings reflect his courage, his sincerity, his unswerving zeal for the faith and his sympathy for the poor. He knew well the lives and thoughts of the ordinary man."⁷

Segal is the first scholar to call Ephrem a 'scientist' because of Ephrem's keen observation and information in the realms of natural phenomena, medicine, machines, etc. Burkitt's view that Ephrem's theology is out of touch with reality is contradicted by Segal. Ephrem is down to earth in his theologization. He was not at all an academic; nor was his theology unrelated to the daily life of his contemporaries.

Post-Beck Studies

In a letter dated 19th February 1991, Segal informs us that he still

6. F. C. Burkitt, *Early Eastern Christianity* (London 1904), pp. 95–96. 99. 109–110.

7. J. B. Segal, *Edesaa, 'The Blessed City'* (Oxford 1970), p. 89.

has no reason to change his view on Ephrem's poetry. He admits that since the critical edition of Ephrem's works a lot of new studies have appeared and still he prefers to hold on to his former views as regards Ephrem's poetry. It is true that Ephrem repeats himself, though not always. But if one thing is true about Ephrem's poetry, it is that it has occasionally a penetrating sense of humour and depth of thought. So the opinions mentioned above are not taken at their face value by Syriac and patristic scholars today,⁸ especially after the first critical edition of most (if not all) of Ephrem's available authentic works by the tireless efforts of Dom Edmund Beck. Mitchell, Leloir, Tonneau and Brock edited the other available authentic works.

The number of dissertations and studies on Ephrem during the past three decades provides ample proof to the increasing interest of Syriac and patristic scholars in Ephremic works. Almost a quarter of a century ago Murray did not hesitate to call Ephrem, "the greatest poet of the patristic age and, perhaps, the only 'theologian-poet' to rank beside Dante".⁹ This view is supported by Tugwell who described Ephrem as

"one of great religious poets of the world".¹⁰ He repeated this view elsewhere.¹¹ There is no doubt that this new interest will continue in the decades to come, demonstrating that Ephrem is one of the greatest poet-theologians Christianity has ever produced.¹²

Ephrem: A Biographical Sketch

Some apparently autobiographical remarks which we can glean from Ephrem's authentic works are more important than the contradictory and unhistorical details provided by later biographies¹³ which were written to satisfy the public who began to be more and more fascinated by the popularity of his works. They wanted to know more about the saintly semi-ascetic genius behind those works and there was very scanty information about his real life in Nisibis and Edessa.

To glorify the early days of Ephrem his biographers invented the story that his father was a pagan priest. Monks wanted to see him as a monk; so he was unhistorically associated with travel in the Egyptian desert to meet monks. Later iconographic representation of Ephrem in an exclusively monastic setting¹⁴ as a dry

8. S. Brock, "The Poetic Artistry of St Ephrem: An Analysis of H. Azym. III" *PdO* 6/7 (1975/76), pp. 21-28.
9. R. Murray, "Ephrem Syrus", *Catholic Dictionary of Theology* (London 1967), p. 222.
10. S. Tugwell, *Prayer: Keeping Company with God*, 1 (Dublin 1974), p. 138.
11. S. Tugwell, *Prayer: Keeping Company with God*, 2 (Dublin 1974), p. 147.
12. See my *The Theology of Divine Names*, p. 3.
13. D. O. Rousseau, "La rencontre de saint Ephrem et de saint Basile", *OS* 2 (1957), pp. 261-284; *OS* 3 (1958), pp. 73-90; B. Outtier, "Saint Ephrem d'après ses biographies et ses oeuvres", *PdO* 4:1-2 (1973), pp. 11-33.
14. See J. Leroy, *Les manuscrits syriaques a peintures conservés dans le Bibliothèques d'Europe et d'Orient: Contribution a l'étude de l'iconographie des églises de langue syriaque* (Paris 1964) I, pp. 237-241; II, plate 61; W. Braunfels, *Lexikon der Christlichen Ikonographie IV: Ikonographie der Heiligen* (Freiburg im Breisgau 1974), pp. 151-153; K. Weitzmann et al., *The Icon* (London 1984), p. 320.

personality is only a fiction. But there is a mid-tenth century icon¹⁵ that depicts him a little more realistically: a small, rather stout, bald-headed, humorous, almost smiling figure with a very short beard! The painter tried his best to cover the baldness by combing the hair from both sides of the head, a rather interesting and rare feature in the history of iconography. In all iconographic traditions about Ephrem a short beard is a regular feature. Apart from the fact that he stands along with Basil, there is not much in the way of anachronistic elements in it. But the monastic figures of Paul of Thebes and Antony the Great are on the opposite side.

One clear picture that emerges from the genuine works of Ephrem is that he was not an extreme ascetic; he is full of wit, humour and personal warmth. His authentic works do not feature him as an exponent of any extreme asceticism. One significant criterion of authenticity of his works is the absence of excessive humility, and the reverse is true of the spurious works under his name. The 'orthodox' wanted to make him a champion of Nicene doctrine and hence he is said to have gone to the Council of Nicaea in 325, along with Jacob of Nisibis.

Even twentieth century scholars like Burkitt find it unbelievable that Ephrem did not champion the post-Nicene doctrinal definitions.

Ephrem's fame in the later Syriac and Greek world was so great that he is said to have visited Basil of Caesarea, and as he knew no Greek a miracle occurred so that both of them could communicate without an interpreter. The childhood vision of Ephrem about the vineshoot from his tongue can be explained in the light of the popularity of his works. A large number of spurious works crept into the Ephremic corpus while many of his genuine works were adapted for liturgical use, often in abridged form, whereas others were lost.

Ephrem was born in or near Nisibis, probably about the year 306, from Christian parents.¹⁶ But Vööbus is more reserved about Ephrem's father being a Christian.¹⁷ Ephrem writes: "I was born in the Way of Truth; although my childhood did not know (it), as I became aware I obtained it in the furnace".¹⁸ Brock thinks that here 'furnace' is an allusion to baptism.¹⁹ Ephrem alludes to his catechumenate and baptism.²⁰ But one cannot agree with Beck when he says that it hints at an adult baptism.²¹ Catechumenate

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15. See K. Weitzmann, *The Monastery of Saint Catherine at Mount Sinai: The Icons, I: From the Sixth to the Tenth Century* (Princeton 1976), pp. 94-98. plates 36.113.115.
 16. E. Beck, *Ephräm der Syrer: Lobgesang aus der Wüste* (Freiburg im Breisgau 1967), p.18; L. Leloir, *Doctrines et méthodes de S. Ephrem d'après son Commentaire de l'Evangile concordant* (CSCO 220 Subs 18, Louvain 1961), p.54; S. Brock, *Saint Ephrem: Hymns on Paradise* (Crestwood 1990), pp.8-9.
 17. A. Vööbus, *Literary Critical and Historical Studies in Ephraim the Syrian* (Stockholm 1958), pp.23.46-47; idem, *History of Asceticism in the Syrian Orient II* (CSCO 197 Subs 17, Louvain 1960), p.84.
 18. HcH 26:10; see Beck's note in *CSCO 170 Syr 77*, p.98 nn 14-15; idem, *Lobgesang*, pp.17-18.
 19. S. Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, p.9 n2; idem, *The Holy Spirit in the Syrian Baptismal Tradition* (Kottayam 1979), pp. 11-14.135.
 20. HcH 3:13.
 21. See above n 18.

could have started at an early age in order to join the *qyāmā* at baptism in boyhood. We are told by Ephrem: "Your truth (was already there) at my youth; (Your truth) (remained) towards my old age".²² We can assume from these two texts that, as Ephrem grew aware (that is, by catechetical instruction) of the 'truth' in which he was born, he accepted baptism. Most probably as a boy he became a *bar qyāmā* at his baptism after a period of catechetical instruction under the saintly bishop Jacob of Nisibis (308-338).²³

Ephrem offers a prayer so that his hymns may serve before God like Samuel.²⁴ This comparison between his hymns and Samuel may indicate a reflection of Ephrem's own childhood and joining the catechumenate at a very early age. Though in CNis 16:16-19 both Ephrem and the city of Nisibis are identified, a careful reading reveals Ephrem's catechumenate under Jacob. Along with Jacob, his successors Babu (c. 338-350), Vologeses (c.350-361) and Abraham (c.361 onwards)²⁵ are remembered with personal gratitude and warmth by Ephrem.²⁶

During the time of bishop Vologeses Ephrem had become a well-known teacher in Nisibis.²⁷ According to Barhadbeshabba of Halwan (second

half of sixth century) Ephrem's teaching career began after A.D. 325. When Jacob of Nisibis returned after attending the council of Nicaea he appointed Ephrem as *mpāšqānā* (biblical exegete of the catechetical school).²⁸ If this assertion as well as the generally held view about his year of birth as c.306 are historically tenable, Ephrem was only c.19 years old when he became *mpāšqānā*. This can be another indication about Ephrem's upbringing in an exemplary Christian atmosphere from a very early age as in the case of Origen who was only 18 when he became head of the catechetical school of Alexandria in 203.

In 338, 346 and 350 the city of Nisibis was besieged²⁹ by the invading Persian army of Shapur II (309-379); and in 358 the war broke out again. As an inhabitant of Nisibis during all these battles, Ephrem speaks of much misery and deprivation. But each time the Persians failed to conquer the city. In 363 the emperor Julian's invasion of Persia failed and he was killed. But Jovian had to give over the city of Nisibis to the Persians as a result of the peace treaty. This was a tragic blow to the Christians of Nisibis; most of them had to desert the city as refugees because of this new political situation under the Persians. Ephrem is said to have stayed a few months

22. HdV 37:10; see *Thes Syr* II, 1918-1921.

23. CNis 16:16-19.

24. HdE 30:20

25. J. M. Fiey, "Les évêques de Nisibe au temps de saint Ephrem", *PdO* 4 (1973), pp. 123-135; I. Ortiz de Urbina, "L'évêques et son rôle d'après saint Ephrem", *PdO* 4 (1973), pp. 137-146.

26. CNis 13-21. The city of Nisibis is speaking in the first person; but there are cases when it is Ephrem who speaks.

27. E. Beck, *Lobgesang.*, pp. 19-20.

28. A Scher, *Mar Barhadbeshabba Arbaya: Cause de la fondation des Ecoles* (PO 4, Paris 1907; Turnhout 1971), pp. 63-377.

29. Theodoret, *Eccl Hist.*, 2:31.

30. A Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, pp. 87-88.

in Amid.³⁰ But in 363/4, as a refugee,³¹ he went to Edessa and his fame soon began to spread into the Greek Christian world.

Edessa was the hotbed of the different sects such as Marcionites, Bardaisanites, Manichaeans, Neo-Arians and countless smaller and less known groups like Valentinians, Aetians, Borborians, Messalians, Qataris, Photinians, Paulinians, Audians, Quqites, etc. So Ephrem's arrival in Edessa would be a great blessing for the smaller 'orthodox' group denigrated as Palutians by their heterodox counterparts. The next decade saw the most creative period of Ephrem's literary output. In all probability he took over the already existing 'school',³² and his students and disciples began to abound. This 'school' is responsible for the rapid spread of Ephrem's reputation far and wide into the Graeco-Latin west. Ephrem's books became text-books of the school for nearly a century.

Nothing suggests that he became a 'monk' in Edessa, though he knew some 'monks' there.³³ What Beck concedes is only a very distant possi-

bility of some short occasional withdrawal of Ephrem into solitude in the desert, though such retreats are extremely unlikely.³⁴ But, so far as the evidence goes, Ephrem remained a *bar qyāmā* though Vööbus held a different view.³⁵ But Vööbus draws on many spurious and later sources. Ephrem's original works to some extent indicate that he was a deacon both in Nisibis and in Edessa.³⁶ Towards the end of his life, during a famine, he organized some relief work to help the sick and dying in Edessa, a work befitting a deacon in those days. According to the Chronicle of Edessa (written in the mid-sixth century) he died on 9th June 373.

Ephrem and Greek Philosophy

How far can the influence of Greek philosophy be traced in Ephrem? According to Brock Ephrem knew what was going on in the Greek Christian world, though most probably he did not know Greek.³⁷ Ephrem's lack of influence by Greek philosophy was emphasized by Murray: "Unlike Bardaisan, Ephrem most probably knew no Greek, shows no debt to Greek philosophy and expresses con-

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 87-88; S. N. C. Lieu, *The Emperor Julian: Panegyric and Polemic* (Liverpool 1986), pp. 96-99.

32. A. Scher, *Cause de la fondation.*, p. 381; A. Vööbus, *History of the School of Nisibis* (CSCO 266 Subs 26, Louvain 1965) pp. 7-9.

33. See E. Beck, "Ein Beitrag zur Terminologie des ältesten syrischen Mönchtums", *Studia Anselmiana* 38 (1956), pp. 254-267; idem, "Asketentum und Mönchtum bei Ephraem", *Il Monachesimo Orientale* (OCA 153, Rome 1958), pp. 341-362; idem, "Ascétisme et monachisme chez saint Ephrem", *OS* 3 (1958), pp. 273-298.

34. E. Beck, "Ephrem Syrus", *RAC* 5 (1962), 523-524; idem, *Lobgesang.*, pp. 21-22.

35. A. Vööbus, *History of Asceticism* II, pp. 92-110; III, pp. 27-50.

36. HcH 56:10-11; CNis 14:1, etc; see E. Beck, *CSCO* 170 Syr 77, p. 192 n 12; idem, *CSCO* 219 Syr 93, p. 43 n. 1.

37. S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye. The Spiritual World Vision of St Ephrem* (Rome 1985), p. 5.

tempt for Greek thought".³⁸ A decade later he reiterated the same.³⁹ But on the basis of the later studies by Beck, Murray seems to have modified his view when he writes: "... in his last years Ephrem must have overcome his aversion to philosophy and done some serious homework"⁴⁰

McVey writes: "Despite uncertainty over the precise lines of his contact with Greek culture, not only a concept of orthodoxy but also many philosophical presuppositions and literary forms analogous to those of Greek Christian theological literature are to be found in his work, and through him they descend in the Syriac heritage"⁴¹ She has brought out some parallels between Ephrem and Greek sources both Christian and non-Christian.⁴² Both Origen and Ephrem "share some principles of interpretation rooted in later Platonism, which deserve further exploration and which are not simply coincidental".⁴³ Segal admits Ephrem's acquaintance with the work of Greek philosophers, though his contact with Greek theologians is not likely: "It is doubtful, in spite of legends to the contrary, whether he

was greatly proficient in the Greek language..."⁴⁴

About the apparent 'contempt' on the part of Ephrem towards 'Greek thought' one has to remember that he was polemicizing against heretical sects who (at least in Ephrem's view) made use of Greek philosophy in their theological deliberations. Ephrem is giving vent to his feelings towards heretics rather than to Greek philosophy as such. In one of his last prose works he would even defend Greek philosophy against Bardaisan!⁴⁵

Bardaisan and the Arians in general knew Greek language and thought very much better than Ephrem, and he can boast of not having imbibed therefrom, and to boast seems to be what we actually does on one occasion.⁴⁶ No doubt he came into direct contact with many bilingual Christians in Edessa; moreover it is almost certain that in the 'school' at Edessa he had to reply to his students from this bilingual background. The problem of Ephrem and Greek philosophy has already been dealt with by the present author elsewhere.⁴⁷

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38. R. Murray, "Ephrem Syrus", *Catholic Dictionary of Theology* 2 (1967), p. 221.
 39. R. Murray, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom. A Study in Early Syriac Tradition* (Cambridge rpt 1977), p. 31.
 40. R. Murray, "The Characteristics of the Earliest Syriac Christianity", *East of Byzantium. Syria and Armenia in the Formative Period*, ed. N. G. Garsoian (Washington 1982), p. 9.
 41. K. E. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian. Hymns* (Mahwah 1989), p. 4.
 42. *Ibid.*, pp. 78 n76. 88 n130. 97 n167. 103 n190. 121 nn 251-252. 149 n355. 211.277 n 48. 302 n142. 465 n709.
 43. K. E. McVey, "Saint Ephrem's understanding of spiritual progress : some points of comparison with Origen of Alexandria", *The Harp* 1:2/3 (1988), p. 128.
 44. J. B. Segal, *Edessa, 'The Blessed City'*, p. 89.
 45. See my *The Theology of Divine Names*, Appendix.
 46. HdF 2:23-24.
 47. See my "St Ephrem and 'Greek Wisdom' ", (*Acta of VIthum Symposium Syriacum*, Cambridge 1992).

Epiphanius in 375 (Haer 51.22,7), Jerome in 392 (De Viris Illus), Palladius in his *Lausiac History* in 419/20, Sozomen c. 439 (Eccl. Hist III. 16; IV. 34), Theodoret c.419/50 (Eccl. Hist II.30 ; IV. 29) and Gennadius towards the end of the fifth century (De Viris Illus 3;67) have something to say about Ephrem. The supposed biographical details keep on increasing throughout the centuries.

The Syriac life, written at least after 525⁴⁸ (abounding in unhistorical details full of anachronisms such as visits to Bishoi and Basil), does not offer us reliable biographical data. So too the *Testament* and the Greek lives are of no historical value. Ephrem's association with any Egyptian-style organized monasticism is unhistorical.⁴⁹ Jacob of Serugh (+521), in his panegyric, mentions Ephrem's special liturgical role as choir master (?) teaching *bnāth qyāmā* his new songs in the Church, calling him 'a second Moses' 'an eagle among the doves' and comparing him to a watchdog of the flock.⁵⁰ This imagery is based on Ephrem's polemics against heretical sects.⁵¹ Such a biographical sketch is closer to what we know from Ephrem's authentic works.

The Problem of Ephremic Corpus

Many of his poetic works were assimilated into the liturgical texts of Syriac Churches and the task of distinguishing his original ideas or hymns is almost impossible as far the liturgical texts are concerned. But Beck's critical edition has already established the texts of almost all known or available works of Ephrem. The task

of sifting out the liturgical traditions, real translations, abridged or emended translations, works from the 'school' of Ephrem, Ephremic ideas or citations preserved in later Syriac and non-Syriac authors, spurious works, etc., is a very complex problem which awaits the attention of patristic and Syriac scholars.

A mere translation of Ephrem's texts will not give his pattern of thinking. A translation going side by side with an exegesis is necessary to make the poet-theologian's thought clearer. Beck's German translation can serve as a guiding factor where the text or the meaning is not clear enough. But occasionally one has to sidestep Beck. Sometimes a literal translation could be helpful whereas a more liberal approach is needed at other times. To use Beck's German translation as the primary source could land us in non-Ephremic terrain.

Ephrem's thoughts are scattered and one has to bring them together to have a comprehensive understanding of his theological world. Some of his texts help to explain his other texts and hence the difficulty and danger of Ephremic studies piece-meal. At times one can and should read things into imagery of his, which has been half-explained, or taken for granted. It is precisely here that we have to apply a more exegetical approach. Ephrem was not a systematic thinker or academic writer. Many of his concepts, phraseology, and above all, the poetic imagery and illustrations call for an interpretative method. Some of his terms could be purposely left

48. S. Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, pp. 20-21; P. Bedjan, AMS 3 (Paris, Leipzig 1882; rpt Hildesheim 1968), pp. 621-665.

49. S. Brock, *Hymns on Paradise*, pp. 25-33. 25 nn 16-17.

50. P. Bedjan, AMS 3, pp. 665-679.

51. HeH 52:2. 53:5-7. CDiat 12:13.

untranslated, as choosing one particular meaning may seem to exclude some nuance of the original or imply an imposition of later meanings. His play on words can be enjoyed only by a Syriacist since such literary features are lost in translation.

Ephrem is primarily a poet who handles theological topics for two kinds of audience or readers at the same time. He wrote most of his important hymn cycles to counter the propaganda of various heretical sects; naturally one can expect a lot of repetitions to drive home certain theological themes into a non-élite audience or readers lest they be misled by his adversaries. But to be effective he had to deal with the subtle arguments of comparatively better-educated propagandists. So he takes for granted a lot of concepts and images which could make sense to his élite contemporaries. He is not keen to elaborate the thoughts of his adversaries in every detail, as he was mainly theologizing for ordinary people confused by too many sectarian propagandists. Many of his prose works were meant for the same purpose, but with a special emphasis as 'school' books for his students who were an élite when compared with the general public. Unless we take into account the pastoral and pedagogic motives in Ephremic works we may not be able to appreciate his poetry as well as theology.

Ephrem's thinking is not shaped by any kind of systematic or classical education. So there is a particular way in which he introduces his thought into his descriptive poetic language. He may use ordinary words with an unusual twist of meaning, adding a wordplay or some other nuance. If

he had been systematically trained to set out his thoughts we would not have the Ephrem we have. All the tireless repetitions, originality of thought, natural passion in arguments, inborn sense of humour occasionally directed at himself as well as at his theological adversaries, his child-like wonder at everything in nature, etc; above all his interest in and observation of the natural and animal and vegetative world around him, and an extraordinary insight into human psychology, make him a different kind of theologian not only in fourth century Syriac domain but also in the entire patristic period.

Had all his compositions survived a better theological world would have reached us. The consistency and logic of Ephrem's system of thought cannot be overlooked since it is a significant undercurrent that runs through the entire Ephremic corpus. It is sad to say that this undercurrent is often undermined in Ephremic studies with the result that an impoverished theological picture emerges.

Theology in Poetry

Talking about God has always been a problem faced by all theologians, though they vary in their approach. The fourth-century theologian-poet Ephrem was aware of the radical importance of this question in theological discussions: how can we speak about something which is beyond all human faculties of perception – physical and intellectual? What language should we use and with how much certainty? For Ephrem it is a measured or balanced intellectual investigation that matters, though his emphasis is always against blunt rationalization.⁵² Choosing poetry as

52. See S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, p. 15.

his typical vehicle for theologizing had its advantages.⁵³ He was not bound by the precision of prose, and even in using poetry, he exercised great freedom in his theological language – employing paradox, metaphors, symbols, types, parallelism and contrast.⁵⁴

Beck, Leloir, Bravo, Hausherr, Brock, Graffin, Saber, Yousif, Hidal, Murray, Noujaim and Bou Mansour have studied selected aspects of Ephrem's many sided theological method. Ephrem had to establish his own philosophy of language in his theologizing, in order to overcome the obstacle provided by any 'systematic' language about God. In doing this, he was going far beyond his contemporary theologians and he proves to be a sort of religious philosopher in his own right.

Ephrem's arrival in Edessa offered him a chance to encounter the Arian propaganda. Ephrem's aversion to Greek philosophy – whatever the extent of this apparent drawback – did not affect his sharp arguments against Arian propagandists.⁵⁵ With a biblical simplicity of theological method he encountered their views with great zeal, skill, intuition and

pragmatism which he did not just acquire anew in his Edessan period; instead he was building on his own already articulated way of thinking. It is almost certain that Ephrem had already at hand a coherent method or approach about how to use language in theology even in his Nisibean period. But it is also true that it was during his Edessan period that he provided the most extensive and systematic exposition of his own philosophy concerning the difficulties facing anyone attempting to speak about God.

Theological 'definitions' are not to be sought in Ephrem, because in his view they can be 'potentially dangerous' and 'actually blasphemous'.⁵⁶ Ephrem was theologizing to counter the rationalistic propaganda of the Arians in Edessa who tried to 'grasp', 'define', 'pry into' divine realities. If human reason is able to define and bring God down to the level of created things, there is no more any concept of God as Creator. By introducing a sharp contrast between human beings (*baryā*, 'ābidā, *breh d-gbilā*) and God (*bārōya*, 'ābōdā, *gābōlā*) Ephrem seeks to bring out the ontological chasm which the creature can never cross.⁵⁷

53. S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, p. 11; idem, "Poet as theologian : St Ephrem", *Studies in Syriac Spirituality* (Kottayam 1988), pp. 53–61 = rpt from *Sobornost* 7:4 (1974), pp. 243–250; idem, *The Harp of the Spirit* (London 2nd ed. 1983), pp. 9–17.

54. R. Murray, *Symbols*, passim; idem, "The theory of symbolism in St. Ephrem's theology", *PdO* 6/7 (1975/76), pp. 1–20.

55. HdF 1:3. 6:1. 13:1. 35:3. 39:2–4. 40:1ff. 46:3–4. 51:7,9. 53:2. 59:1–2. 60:4. 62:2–6,10. 64:10–11. 77:1ff. 78:1ff, etc; E. Beck, *Die Theologie des hl. Ephraem in seinen Hymnen über den Glauben* (Rome 1949), pp. 62–80; idem, *Ephraems Reden über den Glauben: Ihr theologischer Lehrgehalt und ihr geschichtlicher Rahmen* (Rome (1953), pp. 111–125.

56. S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, p. 10.

57. HdF 15:3–5.

Ephrem's emphasis on the significance of the ontological chasm might be the reason why Beck called Ephrem 'an agnostic'⁵⁸—a title which cannot be given to him when we understand Ephrem on his own terms. Bundy has reiterated Beck's view.⁵⁹ When Ephrem criticizes the intellectual scrutiny of God, it is only arrogant rationalism he rules out because such an approach blinds or shortens the reach of 'the eye of our thought'.⁶⁰

The ineffable God can be and should be depicted through *demwān*-images and illustrations. *Dmūtā*-image, likeness-serves as an inexhaustible fountain. The images (*demwān*) we draw in our 'heart' serve as an adorable icon (*yuqnā*) of God.⁶¹ Here *dmūtā* and *yuqnā* mean much the same as what we mean by 'sacrament'.⁶² "*Dmūtā* and *yuqnā* come to our help and thus theologizing involves a 'sacramentalization' of our ordinary language. The sacramental dimension of theological language needs metaphors, symbols and poetry is better equipped for theologizing... We can speak about mystery (*rāzā*), but without tearing down the curtain of silence hanging before mystery. A highly imaginative and pictorial language rules out 'definition' in theologization... Lost in the

endless process of drawing many pictures, Ephrem often bursts into highly pictorial language and eloquent rhetoric that characterizes the breakdown of any restrictive barriers of ordinary words and their usual meaning in order to create a sacramentalized or theological language. Fixedness of word-meaning disappears at times. Once words-insufficient as they are—lose their static nature, they are used as pigments by an artist. There is a continual incompleteness of the picture and hence our God-talk guided by divine pedagogy goes on without a final full stop."⁶³

Anyone who starts talking about God has only to look for symbols and types in Nature and Scripture and interpret those sign-posts with the Key (the incarnate Son). Nature and Scripture serve as a mirror which we have to use if we are to travel by the royal highway set with milestones and inns.⁶⁴ God subjected Himself to human language which every believer can read in Nature and Scripture—the witnesses and harps of self-revealing God.⁶⁵ "Ephrem's response to the Neo-Arian crisis brings out the best in him as a poet-theologian. Ephrem's theory of theological language and divine names seems to be one of the most original

58. E. Beck, *Die Theologie*, p. 25; idem, *Ephräms des Syrsers Psychologie und Erkenntnislehre* (CSCO 419 Subs 58, Louvain 1980), pp. 95-96, 116-147; idem, *Ephräms Trinitätslehre im Bild von Sonne / Feuer, Licht und Wärme* (CSCO 425 Subs 62), pp. 25, 120.

59. D. Bundy, "Language and knowledge of God in Ephrem Syrus", *PBR* 5:2 (1986), p. 100.

60. HdF 5:18, 53:12.

61. HdF 4:10.

62. E. Beck, "Zur Terminologie von Ephräms Bildtheologie", *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie bei den östlichen Vätern und ihren Parallelen in Mittelalter*, ed. M. Schmidt (Regensburg 1982), pp. 239-277.

63. My "Divine Names and Theological Language in Ephrem", p. 320.

64. HdF 65:1ff. 48:4ff. 67:8f. 69:6-10. 79:10; see E. Beck, "Das Bild vom Spiegel bei Ephräm", *OC* 19 (1953), pp. 5-24; idem, "Das Bild vom Weg mit Meilensteinen und Herbergen bei Ephräm", *OC* 65 (1981), pp. 1-39.

65. HdV 27-30, HdF 35:7-10, 37:12, etc; S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, pp. 26-28.

and lasting contributions that make him a religious philosopher in his own right".⁶⁶ The theory of divine names was a 'distinctive feature' in the Neo-Arian polemics.⁶⁷ Unfortunately Ephrem's response to this has hitherto been unnoticed by the vast majority of patristic scholars.

Hausherr offered a brief presentation of divine names in Ephrem in a chapter entitled 'Scriptural and Patristic Names'. Among the Fathers he includes the Apostolic Fathers, Irenaeus, Origen, Basil, Gregory Nazianzen, John Chrysostom, Aphrahat, Ephrem, Pseudo-Denys and Isaac of Nineveh. To one's pleasant surprise it is remarkable that Hausherr devoted more pages to Ephrem than to any other patristic theologian.⁶⁸

Hausherr analysed Ephrem's theory of names and pointed out the significance of HcH 53 in this regard;⁶⁹ he noticed that Ephrem "spoke frequently of names, especially in polemics against heretics".⁷⁰ Hausherr identified "four different categories of names: false names, borrowed names, analogical names given by divine grace, and true

names that correspond to reality and to its operations. So far there is nothing semitic about his philosophy of the name. It is simply common sense".⁷¹ Hausherr based these views on HcH 53:7-8, 12-13, 54:5-8. "We begin to discern a possible semitic nuance when Ephrem concerns himself not about names that are properly divine but about names given to beings born on earth, including in particular the incarnate Word... (which) has divine names and human names..."⁷²

Hausherr identified one of the significant Ephremic notions as "the inscrutability of God and therefore also the inscrutability of the divine names (a doctrine which Ephrem) directed against the indiscreetly curious".⁷³ This enabled him to notice the Ephremic view of divine condescension into "names that are more suited and appropriate to creatures, thus lowering himself in order to elevate his servants by giving them names proper to himself".⁷⁴ The theological significance of the name 'Christians' as understood in Ephrem's works and how it finds expression in Ephrem's devotion to the name of Jesus are also indicated

66. My "Divine Names and Theological Language in Ephrem", p. 318.

67. G. C. Stead, "Logic and the application of names to God", *El Contra Eunomium I en la Produccion Literaria de Gregori de Nisa, VI Coloquio Internacional sobre Gregorio de Nisa*, ed. L. F. Mateo-Seco, J. L. Bastero (Pamplona 1988), pp. 303-320; T. Kobusch, "Name und Sein. Zu den sprachphilosophischen Grundlagen in der Schrift Contra Eunomium des Gregor von Nyssa", *El Contra Eunomium I*, pp. 247-268; M. Wiles, "Eunomius: hair-splitting dialectician or defender of the accessibility of salvation?", *The Making of Orthodoxy. Essays in honour of Henry Chadwick*, ed. R. Williams (Cambridge 1989), pp. 157-172.

68. I. Hausherr, *The Name of Jesus*, tr. C. Cummings (Kalamazoo 1978), pp. 42-52.

69. *Ibid.*, pp. 42-43.

70. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

71. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-44.

72. *Ibid.*, p. 44.

73. I. Hausherr, *The Name of Jesus*, p. 44.

74. *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

75. *Ibid.*, pp. 45-52.

by Hausherr.⁷⁵ He writes: "... it must be said that Ephrem had a devotion to the name of Jesus unequalled by any other Greek author before or contemporary with him, including Origen".⁷⁶

It is quite strange that though Hausherr wrote such an excellent summary of Ephrem's theology of divine names⁷⁷ no scholar has yet attempted a thorough study. In fact a decade before Hausherr, Beck had written about Ephremic themes such as the role of human names as a means of divine revelation,⁷⁸ accurate names and transitory names,⁷⁹ common names,⁸⁰ name and *qnōmā*,⁸¹ the unique Name,⁸² the names of Christ in the Arian and Neo-Arian controversy,⁸³ Trinitarian personal names⁸⁴ and Ephrem's general understanding of the idea of name.⁸⁵

It was unfortunate that Beck did not pursue these introductory views any further. In 1988 (July) and in 1989 (July) I repeatedly asked him 'why'. But he acknowledged that he never thought that 'divine names' was such a significant theme in Ephrem's theology. I suspect that he did not recognize the crucial bearing of the Ephremic concept of ontological chasm on divine names and titles though he

wrote about the gulf between God and creatures in his early as well as his later works.⁸⁶

It was Murray who for the first time convinced the scholarly world how significant the divine names and titles are in the Acts of Judas Thomas, the Manichaean Psalms, Aphrahat, Ephrem and 'Symeon' of Mesopotamia (the author of the Macarian homilies).⁸⁷ Murray writes: "Ephrem, in contrast with Aphrahat, has few lists (of litany-like series of titles) as such. He prefers to enlarge on the imagery implicit in a particular title, but even so he is content with comparatively few of the traditional titles, developing his own imagery freely and widely, according as his own genius suggests to him. It could be said, in fact, that Ephrem has a whole implicit theology of the validity of symbols and names for divine realities, which in some respects anticipates the symbolic theology of the Iconodule Fathers and classical Byzantine iconographical theory".⁸⁸

Murray collected some important titles and presented a theological synthesis based on them.⁸⁹ The 'validity of symbols and names for divine realities' as understood in Ephrem's works is crucial in interpreting Ephrem's

76. *Ibid.*, p. 48.

77. *Noms du Christ et voies d' oraison* was published in 1960.

78. E. Beck, *Die Theologie*, pp. 27-29.

79. *Ibid.*, p. 30.

80. *Ibid.*, p. 13.

81. *Ibid.*, pp. 19-20.

82. E. Beck, *Die Theologie*, pp. 10-11.

83. *Ibid.*, pp. 65-67. 73.

84. *Ibid.*, pp. 40. 82.

85. E. Beck, *Ephraems Reden*, pp. 14-16.

86. E. Beck, *Ephraems Reden*, pp. 42-63; idem, *Ephräms des Syrers Psychologie und Erkenntnislehre*, pp. 97-173.

87. R. Murray, *Symbols*, pp. 23. 27-28. 159-218. 294-295.

88. *Ibid.*, p. 166.

89. *Ibid.*, pp. 354-363.

theological world.⁹⁰ "Central to Ephrem's theological method is his conviction that 'names' are the veils which alone make the Godhead apprehensible".⁹¹ Later studies by Bou Mansour and the present author have corroborated some of these observations.

While Murray's approach concentrated more on a systematic analysis of selected names and titles Brock took a slightly different approach. After pointing out the concept of ontological chasm he delineated Ephrem's understanding of divine names and titles based on a varied selection of Ephremic texts.⁹² He explored the significance of 'clothing metaphors' in relation with 'the garment of names', and thus an extended dimension of 'theosis' through 'names' is put forward.⁹³ Louth has subsequently summarized the main findings of Brock.⁹⁴ But his summary is too short to give an adequate picture.

Ephremic concepts of *gnōmā*, nature and name are further analysed by Bou Mansour,⁹⁵ but with less precision. Bou Mansour attempts to understand the importance of 'names' in the context of Ephrem's trinitarian ideas.⁹⁶ The profound soteriological dimension of the Threefold names in

baptism is another notable nuance.⁹⁷ Bou Mansour criticizes Beck for suspecting probable Stoic influence on Ephrem's theory of names; for Bou Mansour Ephrem is rooted in the 'semitic' tradition and there is no evidence for Stoic influence.⁹⁸

The present author has attempted to explore the theme of divine names further by making a fairly comprehensive analysis of Ephremic texts dealing with divine names and titles, taking for granted the conclusions reached by Murray and Brock. In a very recent study Bruns has attempted to point out the significance of the theme of divine names in the context of Ephrem's Neo-Arian polemics.⁹⁹ Bruns' study is only a most recent example that points to the centrality of the theme of divine names and titles in Ephrem's theological thought. Bruns' contribution is important in understanding the Christological dimension of Ephrem's theology of names. But we believe that there is more to be explored about this topic especially in the light of the concept of ontological chasm.

Some Observations

Ephrem introduced a rationale of his own in order to create a theological

90. See R. Murry, "The theory of symbolism", pp. 1-20.

91. R. Murray, *Symbols*, p. 166 n 7.

92. S. Brock, *The Luminous Eye*, pp. 37-48.

93. *Ibid.*, pp. 43-74. 123-128; S. Brock, "Clothing Metaphors", *Typus, Symbol, Allegorie*, pp. 11-38; *idem*, *Hymns on Paradise*, pp. 45-49. 66-74.

94. A. Louth, *Denys the Areopagite* (London 1989), pp. 79-81.

95. Bou Mansour, *La pensee symbolique*, pp. 8. 20. 72. 77. 130-132. 136-137. 159-162. 165-167. 169-186. 528-529.

96. *Ibid.*, pp. 159 ff.

97. *Ibid.*, pp. 166-167.

98. *Ibid.*, p. 169 n5.

99. P. Bruns, "Arius hellenizans? - Ephräm der Syrer und neo-arianischen Kontroversen seiner Zeit: Ein Beitrag zur Rezeption des Nizänums im syrischen Sprachraum", *ZKG* 101 (1990), pp. 21-57; *idem*, *Das Christusbild Aphrahats des Persischen Weisen* (Bonn 1990), pp. 153-183.

language especial to himself. He was not happy with the scrutinizing approach of the Arians. Was his questioning the reasonableness and validity of not distinguishing between thinking / knowing / speaking about Creator and the created by placing them on equal terms, just a late reaction to Arianism, an afterthought in Ephrem's Edessan period? Or was it a natural and inner evolution in Ephrem's own way of doing theology? The latter seems to be the case, though Late-Arianism and especially Neo-Arianism and various other heretical sects gave an occasion and immediate background.

Ephrem based himself firmly on imagery drawn from Nature and Scripture. He got the concept of ontological chasm from biblical imagery; but he was aware of a similar concept in popular religious mythologies. He ruled out a defining approach and opted for a poetic approach in theology. For him theological language is poetic, iconic, analogical and sacramental. Never forgetting the ontological chasm became the corner stone of his methodology in talking about God.

Our language about God uses ordinary words with the nuance added to those words by a self-revealing God, whose sign-posts, names and epithets, are set up in Nature or revealed to us in Scripture. These names and appellations are *rāzē* and *galyālā*, with the help of which a balanced theological language is made possible. Thus Nature and Scripture are mirrors of divine self-revelation. Nature is the icon and

sacrament of the Creator, for the eyes-physical and intellectual – to see; Scripture explains the Creator in names for the ears – physical and intellectual. In the incarnate Son icon and language give way to reality. God depicted *kasyālā* upon *galyālā*: symbols in Nature, names and titles in Scripture. Looking at the icon, listening to the names, Ephrem is caught up in wonder, awe, praise and silence.

Our knowledge of God is not the kind of knowledge we have about the created realities. More than a century later, we will find the same concept with some Platonic ramifications in Severus of Antioch;¹⁰⁰ in Philoxenus of Mabbug¹⁰¹ whose epistemological distinction in particular, is closer to Ephrem's views;¹⁰² and in Jacob of Serugh (though putting reason against faith);¹⁰³ to mention only a few theologians from the West Syriac tradition. Jacob of Serugh is following Ephrem when he exploits the imagery of the ontological chasm, but with more mythological allusions.¹⁰⁴ In the East Syriac tradition from Narsai (399–502) to Abdišō of Nisibis (+1318) we find traces of Ephrem's legacy.

We have not come across any inner inconsistency in Ephrem's thought as regards the ontological chasm and divine names. He has a language and logic of his own in doing theology. But basically there is no worked-out system or even a precise presentation of all what he thinks. This calls for a careful study of his way of thinking and also the way he elaborates what he thinks. Often there is much repetition; but in many other

100. R. C. Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies: Severus of Antioch, Philoxenus of Mabbug, and Jacob of Sarug* (Oxford 1976), pp. 34–44.

101. *Ibid.*, pp. 102–103.

102. E. Beck, "Philoxenos und Ephräm", *OC* 46 (1962), pp. 61–76.

103. R. C. Chesnut, *Three Monophysite Christologies*, pp. 140–141.

104. *Ibid.*, pp. 113–118.

cases he gives only glimpses, taking for granted various details. No poet is supposed to write with the precision and clarity of prose. This makes him one of the most difficult patristic theologians. If he repeats, it is for the ordinary illiterate believers; if he takes for granted, it is for the intellectuals: the school, heretic propagandists and the élite. If we separate the poet from the theologian, the pastor from the disputant, we may miss the real Ephrem. His naturally rich poetic imagination defies systematization, apparently concealing his disgust for a kind of logic that neglects the ontological chasm.

Patristic scholars writing on Arianism and Neo-Arianism have consistently avoided to accord even a foot-note to the anti-Arian legacy of Ephrem.¹⁰⁵ Patristic scholars have to consider the Syriac world to complement the Greek and Latin patristics. But some four decades ago Dom Beck pointed out Ephrem's views against the Arian crisis. Recently Bruns has attempted to draw more attention to this. Both Cavalcanti and Kopecek, in their excellent studies on Neo-Arianism, deal with the problem as it was confronted mainly by the three Cappadocians.

But a problem remains: how to account for the parallel perspectives in Ephrem and the Cappadocian Fathers as regards Neo-Arianism? The

Cappadocians blended traditional Christian teachings with Greek philosophical views to combat heresies. Ephrem based himself on the former with a great emphasis on Scripture, and hence the difference. We do not suggest any possibility of contact or borrowing on any side. But the parallels call for a reappraisal of the Neo-Arians in the light of Ephrem's polemics, especially because of the chronological precedence of Ephrem over the Cappadocians.

Gregory of Nyssa wrote his *Contra Eunomium* between c. 380–383; Gregory Nazianzen wrote his *Orations* between 379 and 381. It is only natural that both of them were influenced by what Basil wrote (c. 364)¹⁰⁶ in *Adversus Eunomium* – almost contemporaneous with Ephrem's anti-Arian works. It is not even theoretically possible that Ephrem composed all those books only after Basil composed his response to Eunomius. This creates even more problems: how far and wide into the East did the disputes by Aetius and Eunomius reach before the publication of Aetius' *Syntagmation*, Eunomius' *Apology* and Basil's *Adversus Eunomium*? Aetius is a 'Syrian' in Basil's words, since he came from Coele-Syria.¹⁰⁷ It is generally suggested that Eunomius wrote his *Apology* c. 361. Why it was called '*Apology*' is disputed by the Cappadocians who are evidently unwilling to concede such a title.¹⁰⁸

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105. M. Simonetti, *Studi sull' Arianesimo*; idem, *La Crisi Ariana nel IV secolo* R. C. Gregg, D. E. Groh, *Early Arianism: A View of Salvation* (London 1981); R. C. Gregg, ed., *Arianism: Historical and Theological Reassessments* (Cambridge, Mass. 1985); R. Williams, *Arius: Heresy and Tradition* (London 1987); R. P. C. Hanson. *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God: The Arian Controversy 318–381* (Edinburgh 1988).
106. See M. V. Anastos, "Basil's KATA EYNOMIOY", *Basil of Caesarea Christian Humanist, Ascetic*, ed. P. J. Fedwick, pp. 67–136; "A chronology of the life and works of Basil of Caesarea", *Basil of Caesarea: Christian Humanist, Ascetic*, p. 10 n57.
107. Basil, *Adversus Eunomium* I. i (PG 29.500).
108. M. V. Anastos, "Basil's KATA EYNOMIOY", p. 26.

Was not Eunomius the master dialectician clarifying and defending the already propagated views of his teacher Aetius?

The oral propaganda of Neo-Arianism had been going on for more than a decade before Eunomius' written *Apology*. Aetius' crypto-syllogistic theses forming his work *Syntagmation*¹⁰⁹ were suited for oral propaganda and disputes. These semi-syllogistic sayings were only the written down version of oral propaganda of the early 350s; they appeared in book form in 359. During this period Ephrem composed his SdF, a few years before Eunomius composed the *Apology* and Basil wrote *Adversus Eunomium*. Hence it would be quite reasonable to suppose that Ephrem began to counter the Late-Arian and Neo-Arian views during the last decade of his Nisibean period. SdF is a metrical homily written almost the same period as – if not a few years earlier than – Aetius published his *Syntagmation*, in response to the oral propaganda of Late-Arian and emerging Neo-Arian groups. Ariens find mention in HcH 24:12.16 and Arius in HcH 24:19.21.

Even if all the hymns in HdF and HcH were composed between 363/4–373 the thematic relationship between SdF and HdF, and HcH and Pr Ref cannot be overlooked. The arrangement of Ephrem's hymns into cycles does not necessarily give any clue as to whether they were all composed over a short period or not. There is very little thematic development as regards his concepts of the ontological chasm and divine names. This need not specifically indicate a shorter period; because a comparison of the concept of the ontological chasm in HdP, CNis, HdF, LP and Pr Ref does not show any significant thematic development. HdP is one of his earliest surviving works, but Pr Ref

one of the latest compositions – if not the latest. Moreover, Ephrem's views about God as *Ilūtā*, creatures as *genyānā*, *galyālā* as vehicles of *kasyātā* do not represent a change or development.

As a poet-theologian Ephrem often appears not to be tied to any particular period or socio-cultural milieu. This is because he did not base his theological deliberations on any particular system of philosophy, and because he did not write to fashion a well-thought-out system of his own. It is precisely his unsystematic and poetic imagery that makes him an original theologian during the patristic period or even later.

As a poet and theologian Ephrem stands out and any effort to separate the poet from the theologian would result in dragging him out of his proper context. Ephrem's legacy is better understood in the context of his own works rather than in the shade of the popularity accorded to him by successive generations: as a theologian he lived in the fourth century; as a poet he is not confined to his own time, place and culture; as he did his theology mainly in poetry with the help of imagery drawn from Nature and Scripture rather than from speculative and systematic philosophy, the iconic or sacramental character of Nature and Scriptural language make him speak beyond his time, place and culture. This is quite natural for two reasons: in every time and place there is an interest in talking about God, and those theological systems which are based too much on any particular culture or school of thought of a particular time and place will crumble sooner or later. Secondly, Nature where we live and Scripture we believe in have a dynamic way of communicating with every generation without ever exhausting their underlying iconic and sacramental character.

Koonammakkal Thoma Kathanar

109. L. R. Wickham, "The *Syntagmation* of Aetius the Anomean", *JTS* n. s. 19 (1968), pp. 532–569; idem, "The date of Eunomius' *Apology*: a reconstruction", *JTS* n. s. 20 (1969), pp. 231–240.

Christ and Church: A Eucharistic Understanding

Eucharist is at the very centre of the life of the Church in the primitive Christian Tradition. The early Church primarily experienced the Person of Christ in the Eucharistic celebration. Bearing this fact in mind, the modern Orthodox theologian John Meyendorff says that true Christology can only be a Eucharistic Christology because Eucharist is an eschatological anticipation of the Kingdom of God. Eucharist is, indeed, a manifestation of the *whole* Christ: his total humanity, "enhypostasized" in the Logos, risen from the dead and sitting at the right hand of the Father, anticipating the Parousia.¹ This eschatological dimension of the Church is typical of the Eastern spirituality, which lives and teaches its theology liturgically; it contemplates the being of God and the being of the Church with the eyes of worship, mainly of the Eucharistic worship, image of the "*eschata*" *par excellence*. The primitive Church was very conscious of the decisive importance of the *Eucharist* in ecclesiology.

The early Church envisaged the Eucharist not just as one sacrament among many, as an objective act or a *means of grace* used or administered by the Church. The ancient understanding of the Eucharist – common on its

general lines until around the twelfth century to both East and West – was very different. The celebration of the Eucharist by the early Church was, above all, the gathering of the people of God *epi to auto*, that is, both the manifestation and realization of the Church. Its celebration on Sunday – the day of the *eschata* – as well as all its liturgical content testified that during the Eucharist, the Church did not live only by the memory of a historical fact – the Last Supper and the earthly life of Christ, including the Cross and Resurrection – but it accomplished an eschatological act. As the Greek theologian J. D. Zizioulas points out it was in the Eucharist that the Church would contemplate her eschatological nature, would taste the very life of the Holy Trinity. All the fundamental elements which constituted her historical existence and structure had by necessity, to pass through the Eucharistic community to be *sure*, that is, ecclesiologically *true*. No ordination to the ministries of the Church took place outside the Eucharistic community. The Eucharist was not an act of a pre-existing Church; it was an event constitutive of the being of the Church, enabling the Church *to be*. The Eucharist *constituted* the Church's being.²

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1. J. MEYENDORFF, "Christ's Humanity: The Paschal Mystery", *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, Vol. 31, no. 1, 1987, pp. 31–32.
 2. J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion, Studies in Personhood and the Church*, Crestwood, New York, 1985, pp. 20–21.

Church – The Body of Christ

Central to the Christology endorsed by the early Councils was the vision of Christ as both the eternal Logos and the “New Adam”, who restored the unity of the whole humanity with himself as the divine model according to whose image human beings were created in the beginning.³ Hence Meyendorff concludes that true Christology is never individualistic. Christ was a historical and individual human figure, but, as Logos, “through whom all things were made”, He is the Prototype, the model related to the whole of humanity which was created according to His image. The divine hypostasis of the Logos does not possess humanity in the same limited, individual way as a human created hypostasis does. The Logos assumes *our* nature for the sake of the salvation of *all*. This is vividly shown in scriptural images of Him being the Vine holding grapes, or the head of the Body. To clothe the naked, to visit the sick, to feed the hungry, is to *serve* Him (Matt. 25:31–46). When Saul was persecuting the Christians, Jesus asked him on the way to Damascus: “Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?” (Acts 9:4). The image of the passover can help us the true dimension of Christ’s humanity. Assuming and identifying Himself with the poor, the weak, the persecuted and the dying – i.e., with fallen humanity as a whole – He leads them to life and joy. This is the Paschal mystery of Christ. His identification with the *weak* cannot be reduced to social or medical fields. But here we see “poverty of the Spirit”, spiritual sickness and spiritual death, common to the entirety

of fallen humanity. The New Adam assumes that poverty in order to lead humanity to glory. And the result of his resurrection is the Church: *the gathering of all into His risen Body*.⁴

The Church, according to St Cyril of Alexandria, is “the holy city which has not been sanctified by observing the law – for the law made nothing perfect (heb. 7:19) – but by becoming conformed to Christ: participating in the divine nature through the communion of the Holy Spirit, who stamped us with His seal in the day of our deliverance when we were washed from every stain and freed from all iniquity”.⁵ It is in the Body of Christ, according to Irenaeus, that we have access to the fount of the Holy Spirit.⁶ Therefore it is necessary to be united to the Body of Christ in order to receive the grace of the Holy Spirit.

The Russian theologian Sergius Bulgakov expresses the concept of the Church as the Body of Christ in the following words: “The risen Lord lives with us, and our life in the Church is a mysterious life in Christ. Christians bear that name precisely because they belong to Christ. They live in Christ and Christ lives in them. The Incarnation is not only an idea or a doctrine; it is above all an event which happened once in time but which possesses all the power of eternity, and this perpetual incarnation, a perfect, indissoluble union, yet without confusion, of the two natures, divine and human, makes the Church. Since the Lord did not merely approach humanity but became one with it, Himself becoming man, the Church is the Body of Christ, as a unity of life

3. J. MEYENDORFF, “Christ as Saviour in the East”, in B. McGinn, J. Meyendorff and J. Leclercq, Eds., *Christian Spirituality, Origins to the Twelfth Century*, Crossroads, New York, 1989, p. 243.

4. J. MEYENDORFF, “Christ’s Humanity”, pp. 30–31.

5. In Isaiah V, i, 52 I, P. G. 70, col. 1444 cd.

6. Adv. Haeres., V, 24, I, P. G. 7, col. 966.

with Him.⁷ The Church, although it is the Body of Christ, is not the Christ – the God – Man; but it is *life in Christ*, or being in Christ, and therefore, does not involve personal or “hypostatic” identification with the Logos, because the person is that which is unique. It involves a sharing, through the power of the Spirit, in Christ’s glorified humanity – a humanity that remains fully human even after its glorification.⁸

The Body of Christ was manifested where two or three were gathered in His name (Matt. 18:20) and where therefore the Pauline image of the Body could be concretely present. That “Body” is the Church realized most fully in the Eucharist.⁹ Meyendorff thinks that there is a sense in which the humanity of the historical Jesus can be said to be *incomplete* within Him as a human individual. He was indeed “perfect” man, but this perfection cannot be conceived without its eschatological fulfillment still to come. This is so because in Him and through Him as the Incarnate Logos, *any* human being personally and humanity as a whole, is called to bring forth authentic fruits and find his/her authentic destiny. Ephesians 4:12–16 tells us that the Body of Christ is still being *built*, that “the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” is *still to be attained*. Christ’s Body is still being built with new members being added to it, and innumerable others still being awaited. What makes the Eucharist to be real and the Church to be Catholic is indeed the presence of Christ, but it is a Christ who calls,

who expects and who answers because divine love for the entire creation implies real *growth* of His Body until He comes again.¹⁰

In the thought of St Maximus the Confessor we find the idea that the Church is the centre of the universe, the sphere in which its destinies are determined. All are called to enter into the Church, for if man is a microcosm, the Church is a *macro-anthropos*.¹¹ It increases and is compounded in history, bringing the elect into its bosom and uniting them to God. The world grows old and falls into decay, while the Church is constantly rejuvenated and renewed by the Holy Spirit who is the source of its life. At a given moment, when the Church has attained the fullness of growth determined by the will of God, the external world, having used up its vital resources, will perish. As for the Church, it will appear in its internal glory as the Kingdom of God. It will then stand revealed as the true foundation of the creatures raised up in incorruptibility to be united to God who will be all in all. But, according to Maximus, some will be united by grace, others apart from grace.¹² Some will be deified by the energies which they have acquired in the interior of their being; others will remain without, and for them the deifying power of the Spirit will be an external flame, intolerable to all those whose will is opposed to God. The Church then is the Sphere within which union with God takes place in this present life, the union which will

7. S. BULGAKOV, *A Bulgakov Anthology*, ed. James Pain, Nikolas Zernov, Philadelphia, 1976, p. 119.

8. J. MEYENDORFF, “Christ as Saviour,” p. 244.

9. *Ibid.*

10. J. MEYENDORFF, “Christ’s Humanity”, pp. 31–32.

11. *Mystagogia*, II–IV, *P. G.*, 91, col. 668–72.

12. *Questiones ad Thalassium*, LIX, *P. G.* 90, col. 609b. *Cap. Theol. and oecon.*, Cent. IV, 20, *P. G.* 90, col. 1312c.

be consummated in the age to come, after the resurrection of the dead.¹³

All the conditions which are necessary that we may attain the union with God are given in the Church. This is why the Eastern Fathers often compares it to earthly paradise in which the first men were to have gained access to the state of deification. It is true that the human nature no longer possesses its primitive immortality and incorruptibility; but death and corruption are become the way toward eternal life, for Christ "united to himself all through which death reaches"¹⁴ and through death has overthrown death. According to St Gregory of Nyssa, we enter into eternal life through baptism and resurrection. Baptism - image of the death of Christ - is already the beginning of our resurrection, "a way out from the labyrinth of death".¹⁵ The Body of Christ to which the Christians are united through baptism, becomes as St. Athanasius says, "the root of our resurrection and of our salvation."¹⁶

The Church is one indivisible Body of Christ in which the believers, as members of this body, are united with Christ as its Head and with one another. The supreme expression and the perennial source of this unity is the sacrament of the Eucharist, communion with the Body and Blood of Christ: "Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we shall partake of the one Bread" (1 Cor. 10:17). The one Church on earth exists in many local Churches

whose life is centered on the celebration of the Holy Eucharist in communion with the lawful bishop and his priests. St Ignatius of Antioch admonishes, "Let all follow the bishop as Jesus Christ did the Father, and the priests as you would the apostles Let the Eucharist be held valid which is offered by the bishop or by one to whom the bishop has committed this charge."¹⁷ The ancient Church always understood the sacrament of Holy Eucharist as the focal point of the life of the entire Body of Christ. In this sacrament the faithful receive the Body and Blood of Christ and by it are united with Him and through Him with one another and take part in the power of His work of salvation that has its climax in His sacrifice on the Cross and His Resurrection. As Meyendorff considers, the ecclesiological significance of the Eucharist, though challenged by the Hellenistic world view which tended to interpret it as a system of *symbols* visually contemplated by the individual, was always maintained by the Eastern *lex orandi* and reaffirmed by those who followed the mainstream of traditional theology.¹⁸ In the controversy on the azymes, the implication on the Eastern side was that the Eucharist is indeed a paschal mystery, in which our fallen humanity is transformed into the glorified humanity of the New Adam, Christ: this glorified humanity is realised in the Body of Christ - the Church.

These anthropological presuppositions of Eastern Eucharistic theology

13. V. LOSSKY, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, Crestwood, New York, 1976, pp. 178-179.

14. GREGORY NAZIANZEN, *Oratio XXX*, 21, P. G. 34, col. 132b.

15. *Oratio Chatechetica magna* 35, P. G. 45, col. 88ff.

16. *Oratio III contra Arianos* 13, P. G. 25, col. 393-6.

17. *Smyrn.* 8,1, P. G. 5, col. 582.

18. J. MEYENDORFF, *Byzantine Theology, Historical Trends and Doctrinal Themes*, Fordham University Press, New York, 1983, p. 206.

necessarily had to include the concepts of "synergy" and the unity of mankind. It is against the background of the Greek patristic doctrine of "synergy" that one can really understand the significance of the Eastern insistence of the epiclesis in the Eucharistic Liturgy, another issue debated in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries by Eastern and Western theologians. The text of the epiclesis as it appears in the Eastern liturgies implies that the mystery is accomplished by a prayer of the entire Church—a concept which does not necessarily exclude the idea that the bishop or priest pronouncing the words of institution acts *in persona Christi*, as Western theology insists, but which deprives this notion of its exclusivity by interpreting the ministerial sacerdotal power to perform the sacraments as a function of the entire worshipping Body of Christ.¹⁹

Nicolas Cabasilas while defending the epiclesis, recalls that all sacraments are accomplished through prayer of the community, and especially he cites the consecration of the chrism, the prayers of ordination, of absolution and of the anointing of the sick.²⁰ He writes, "it is the tradition of the Fathers, who received this teaching from the apostles and their successors, that the sacraments are rendered effective through prayer; all the sacraments and particularly the holy Eucharist."²¹ This "deprecatory" form of sacramental rites does not imply a doctrine of validity *ex opere operantis*, i. e., dependent upon the worthiness of the celebrant. According to Cabasilas, "He who celebrates the

sacrifice daily is but the minister of the grace. He brings to it nothing of his own; he would not dare to do or say anything according to his own judgment and reason Grace works all; the priest is only as minister, and that very ministry comes to him by grace; he does not hold it on his own account."²²

Hence Meyendorff concludes that the very mystery of the Church, fully realized in the Eucharist, overcomes the dilemma of prayer and response, of nature and grace, of the divine as opposed to the human, because the Church as Body of Christ, is precisely a communion of God and man, not only where God is present and active but where humanity becomes fully *acceptable to God*, fully adequate to the original divine plan; prayer itself then becomes an act of communion, of God and man, not only where God is present and active, but where humanity becomes fully *acceptable to God*. The sinfulness is still present in each individual member of the Church, but only in as much as he has not fully appropriated the divine presence and refuse to conform to it; the presence itself is the "new testament in my Blood" (Lk 22:20), and God will not take it away. Thus, all Christians—including the bishop or the priest—are individually nothing more than sinners whose prayers are not necessarily heard, but *when gathered together in the name of Christ*, as the "Body of Christ" (Church of God), they are a part in the New Testament, to which God has eternally committed Himself through His Son and the Spirit.²³ Eastern ecclesiology is based on the idea that

19. J. MEYENDORFF, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 206.

20. N. CABASILAS, *Commentary on the Divine Liturgy*, 29, Tr. J. M. Hussey and P. A. McNulty, London, SPCK, 1960, pp. 74-75.

21. *Ibid* pp. 75-76

22. *Ibid* pp. 104-105

23. J. MEYENDORFF, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 207.

wherever there is the Eucharist there is the Church in its fullness as the Body of Christ. The whole Christ is present and incarnate in each Eucharistic community. Each Eucharistic Community is, therefore, in full unity with the rest by virtue *not of external super-imposed structure* but the whole Christ present in each of them.

Eucharist, Source of Unity and Catholicity in the Church

In his first letter to the Corinthians (10: 16-17) and in connection with the celebration of the Lord's Supper Paul writes: "The cup of blessing which we bless is it not a communion (koinonia) of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break is it not a communion of the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf". This is not the only time that Paul speaks of the "many" as being "one" in Christ (cf. Gal. 3:28; 2 Cor. 11:2; Eph. 2:15, etc.).

Eastern Christology and Ecclesiology were always conscious of the aspect of this Eucharistic unity. Zizioulas comments that the incorporation of the "many" into the "one", or of the "one" as the representative of the "many" goes back to a time earlier than Paul. It is an idea basically connected with the figures of the "servant of God" and the "Son of Man". What is significant here is that this idea was from the beginning connected with the Eucharistic consciousness of the Church. Paul in writing those words to the

Corinthians, was simply echoing a conviction apparently widely spread in the primitive Church.²⁴ Thus with regard to the tradition of the Servant of God, the texts of the Last Supper, in spite of their differences on many points, agree on the connection of the Supper with the "many", "you", "for", or "in the place of" (anti, peri) whom the one offers himself (see, Mark 14:24; Matt. 26:28; Lk 22:20 and 1 Cor. 11:24). This relation of the Eucharist to the tradition of the Servant of God in whom the many are represented established itself in the liturgical life of the Church already in the first century. In the most ancient liturgical prayer of the Roman Church, which is found in I Clement, we come across the idea of the Servant of God many times in connection with the Eucharist.²⁵ The same is true about the *Didache*, where this idea finds its place in an even more explicit way.²⁶

According to Zizioulas, similar observations can be made about the connection of the Eucharist with the "Son of Man" tradition. If the sixth chapter of the Gospel of John refers to the Eucharist, it is significant that the prevailing figure of the Son of Man is connected there with the Eucharist. He is the one who gives "the food which remains to eternal life" (Jn.6:27) Unlike the manna which God gave to Israel through Moses, this bread is the "true bread" which, having come down from heaven, is nothing else but "the Son of Man" himself (John 6: 27, 51). Hence the eating of this bread is called specifically the eating of "the flesh of

24. J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion*, pp. 145-146. On the theory of the "corporate personality" in the Bible, see: S. Pedersen, *Israel: Its Life and Culture*, 1926; H. Wheeler Robinson, *The Hebrew Conception of Corporate Personality*, 1936, pp. 49ff; J. de Fraine, Adam et son lignage: *Etudes sur la "personalite Corporative" dans la Bible* (1959)

25. I Clement, 59: 2-4.

26. *Didache*, 10, 2; 9, 2.

the *Son of Man*" (John 6:53), who takes into himself every one who eats this bread (John 6:56), thus fulfilling his role as the corporate Son of Man.²⁷

It is precisely this idea that prevails in chapters 13–17 of St. John's Gospel, where the Eucharistic presuppositions of the Last Supper are so deeply connected with the eschatological unity of all in Christ, finding their climax in the prayer that "they all may be one" (John 17). It is impossible to see all this outside a Eucharistic context in which the idea of the unity of the "many" in the "one" prevails. The local Eucharistic community receives the name *ekklesia* or even *ekklesia tou Theou* already in the letters of St. Paul. A careful study of I Corinthians 11 reveals that the term *ekklesia* is used in a dynamic sense: "when you come together into, i. e., when *you become ekklesia*," (v. 18). This implies what in the following verses becomes explicit, namely that the Eucharistic terms "coming together", "coming together *epi to auto*", "Lord's Supper", etc., are identified with the ecclesiological terms "*ekklesia*" or "*ekklesia of God*". This local community is called the *whole Church*, already by Paul again (Rom. 16:23). What

remains a fact is that, in the literature of the first three centuries at least, the local Church, starting with Paul was called the *ekklesia tou Theou* or the whole Church or even the *katholike ekklesia* and this related to the concrete Eucharistic community.²⁸

As the ecclesiology of Ignatius of Antioch makes clear, even the context in which the term *katholike ekklesia* appears is a Eucharistic one, in which Ignatius' main concern was the unity of the Eucharistic community.²⁹ According to the Ignatian sense it would mean that the Eucharistic community is *exactly the same* as the whole Church united in Christ. Catholicity, therefore, does not mean anything else but the *wholeness and fullness and totality* of the Body of Christ "exactly as" it is portrayed in the Eucharistic community. The East always believed that in the Eucharist the Church is fully the *Church*, and that the Eucharist is the ultimate criterion and seal of all the other sacraments. Following pseudo-Dionysius, who spoke of the Eucharist as the "sacrament of sacraments",³⁰ as the focal point of each particular sacrament,³¹ Eastern theologians affirm the absolute centrality of

27. J. D. ZIZIOULAS; *Being as Communion*, pp. 146–147.

28. Ibid. p. 148. It is not accidental that the term "catholic" came to be applied to the *cathedral*, i. e., the main Church where the bishop would celebrate and the entire episcopal community would be present (Council of Trullo, canon 59). The terms *ecclesia major*, *ecclesia senior* and *ecclesia catholica* became synonymous expressions by which the cathedral was distinguished from the parishes from the fourth century on. It is probably from this use of the word "catholic" that the *katholikon* came to be applied to the main Church in the Eastern monastery, since this was the place where monks would gather for the celebration of the Eucharist. The significance of these usages for the connection between the Eucharistic community and the "catholic Church" in the early centuries needs no emphasis.

29. *Smyrn.*, 8: "... Let that be deemed a valid Eucharist which is under the leadership of the bishop or one to whom he has entrusted it. Wherever the bishop appears let there be multitude of the people be, just as wherever Jesus Christ is there (is) the catholic Church."

30. *Eccl. Hier.*, III, 1; *P. G.* 3: 424c.

31. Ibid. col. 444d.

the Eucharist in the life of the Church: "It is the final sacrament," writes Cabasilas, "because it is not possible to proceed further and to add anything to it."³² Any local Church where the "divine liturgy" of the Eucharist is celebrated possesses the marks of the true Church of God: unity, holiness, catholicity, and apostolicity. These marks cannot belong to any human gathering; they are the eschatological signs given to a community through the Spirit of God. Inasmuch as a local Church is built upon and around the Eucharist, it is not simply a part of the universal people of God; it is *the fullness* of the Kingdom which is anticipated in the Eucharist, and the Kingdom can never be *partially* one or *partially* catholic. "Partiality" belongs only to the individual appropriation of the given fullness by the members, who are limited by belonging to the "old Adam" it does not exist in the Body of Christ, indivisible, divine and glorious.³³

The sacrament of the Eucharist is a realization of the unity of our nature both with Christ and, at the same time, with all the members of the Church. According to St John Chrysostom, it is necessary to understand the wonder of this sacrament, "what it is, why it was given, and what is the profit of the action. We become one body; members, as it is said, of his flesh and of his bones... This is effected by the food which he has freely given us... He has mingled his body with ours that we may be one,

as body joined to head."³⁴ Or as St John Damascene puts it, "If union is in truth with Christ and with one another, we are assuredly voluntarily united also with all those who partake with us."³⁵ In the Eucharist the Church appears as a single nature united to Christ.³⁶

Thus the nature of the Eucharistic community was determined by its being "eucharistic" i. e., by the fact that it consisted in the communion of the Body of Christ in its totality and in its inclusiveness of *all*. What each eucharistic community was meant to reveal, was not part of Christ but the whole Christ and not a partial or local unity but the full eschatological unity of all in Christ.³⁷

The liturgical discipline and Eastern Canon Law try to protect this unifying and catholic character of the Eucharist. They require that on each altar no more than one Eucharist be celebrated each day; similarly a bishop or priest is not allowed to celebrate twice on the same day. Whatever the practical inconveniences, these rules aim at preserving the Eucharist at least nominally as the gathering of all together at the same place; *all* should be together at the same altar, around the same bishop at the same time because there is only one Christ, one Church, and one Eucharist. The idea that the Eucharist is the sacrament uniting the whole Church remained alive in the East and prevented

32. *De vita in Christo*, IV, 1; P. G. 150: 581b. Symeon of Theslonika applies this idea concretely to individual sacraments. Concerning marriage, for example, he writes that the bridal pair "must be ready to receive communion, so that their crowning be a worthy one and their marriage valid." (*De sacro templo*, 282; P. G. 155: 512d - 513a.)

33. J. MEYENDORFF, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 209.

34. *In Joannem, homil. XLVI*, P. G., 59, col. 260

35. *De Fide Orth.*, IV, 13, P. G., 114, col. 1153b.

36. V. LOSSKY, *Mystical Theology*, p. 181.

37. J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion*, p. 154.

the multiplication of Masses of intention and of low Masses. The Eucharistic liturgy always remained a festal event in Eastern tradition, a celebration involving, at least in principle the whole Church.³⁸

Eucharist as the Theological Norm for Ecclesiastical Structure

As a manifestation of the Church's unity and wholeness, the Eucharist served as the ultimate theological norm for ecclesiastical structure. For the East, the Church was primarily the place where God and man met in the Eucharist, and the Eucharist became the criterion of ecclesial structure and the inspiration of all Christian action and responsibility in the world. Eucharist was understood as a cosmological and ecclesiological dimension which is so well affirmed in the formula of Byzantine oblation: "Thine own of thine own, we offer unto Thee in behalf of all and for all". The Christians of the first centuries gathered together regularly for the celebration of the Lord's Supper, and nothing – not even the Roman persecutions – could prevent them from holding their assemblies, because the very nature of their faith implied that God abided not in each of them individually, but in the entire Church, the Body of Church. Only by being a member of this Body could the individual also be a member of Christ. Early Christians considered each Church assembly, held in the name of Christ, that is, in unity and love, as witness of Christ's victory over human egoism, selfishness and sin.³⁹

St Ignatius of Antioch wrote to the Church of Ephesus: "Be zealous to assemble more frequently to render thanks (eucharistein: to celebrate the Eucharist) and praise God. For when we meet together frequently, the powers of Satan are destroyed and danger from him is dissolved in the harmony of your faith."⁴⁰ As Meyendorff observes, no other passage of the early Christian literature gives a clearer indication of the very mystery of the Christian Church: by the power of the Holy Spirit, scattered and separated human beings are able to become, when they gather, a powerful and victorious transfigured reality, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt. 18:20). This real presence of God in the assembly of the Church makes it possible that the various Christian ministries are really Christ's ministries, and this applies, first of all, to the episcopal function. The function of the bishop is to fulfill in the assembly the ministry of the Head, to sit where Christ as among his disciples, to teach what he taught, to be the shepherd and the high-priest.⁴¹ There is no Church without the bishop, but the reverse being also true, there is no bishop outside the Church, since the head needs a body to fulfill its function. In the views of St Ignatius, which are confirmed by the entire tradition of the Church, it is in the Eucharist that the divinely instituted episcopal ministry finds its real meaning. As mentioned elsewhere in this article, the Eucharist is the sacrament of our unity with God and of our unity in Christ among ourselves. The bishop stands at the

38. J. MEYENDORFF, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 209.

39. J. MEYENDORFF, *Orthodox and Catholicity*, New York, 1966, pp. 113–114.

40. *Ephesians 6:13*, Tr. G. G. Walsh, *The Fathers of the Church, The Apostolic Fathers*, New York, 1947, p. 92.

41. J. MEYENDORFF, *Orthodoxy and Catholicity*, p. 114.

very centre of this mystery. The sacramental functions in the Eucharistic Liturgy are also expressed in his pastoral responsibilities which oblige him to assure, in the practical life of the Church, the unity given sacramentally by God in the Eucharist. His ministry is one of reconciliation and unity.⁴²

The local Church where the Eucharist is celebrated was always considered to be not merely a "part" of a universal organization, but the *whole* Body of Christ manifested sacramentally and including the entire "communion of Saints" living or departed.⁴³ Thus the local Eucharistic assembly is the revelation of the eschatological unity of all in Christ. This means that *no mutual exclusion* between the local and the universal was possible in a Eucharistic context, but one was automatically involved in the other.⁴⁴ This principle found expression in the structure of the Eucharistic community through the fact that the head of this community was related to the other Eucharistic communities in the world by his very ordination. The fact that in each episcopal ordination at least two or three bishops from the neighbouring Churches ought to take part⁴⁵ tied the episcopal office and with it the local Eucharistic community in

which the ordination to it took place with the rest of the Eucharistic communities in the world in a fundamental way. This fact not only made it possible for each bishop to allow a visiting fellow bishop to preside over his eucharistic community⁴⁶ but must have been also one of the basic factors in the appearance of episcopal conciliarity.⁴⁷

The bishop alone – or sometimes his delegate – is the celebrant of the Eucharist. In the Eucharistic assembly, as Meyendorff points out, he is the image of God himself. Every Eucharistic community was originally headed by a bishop, but with the expansion of Christianity and multiplication of communities, permanent Eucharistic functions were performed by presbyters in many Churches. In certain regions, these communities headed by presbyters remained submitted to the original "episcopal" community. The direct and original meaning of the episcopate was thus obscured since the bishop now became the head of *several* communities. This finally led to our present form of episcopal ministry.⁴⁸ The following prayer of the episcopal ordination in the Byzantine rite shows the true character of the episcopate, "O Lord our God, who in Thy providence has instituted for us teachers of like

42. At the time of St Ignatius, every Christian community was headed by a bishop who normally was the only celebrant of the Eucharist. Later, with the expansion of Christianity, the bishops started to delegate their privileges to priests on a permanent basis. The parish priest is nowadays the normal centre of Church life on the parish level, but he cannot fulfill these functions unless he is delegated by the bishop.

43. J. MEYENDORFF, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 209.

44. J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion*, p. 155.

45. HIPPOLYTUS, *Apostolic Tradition*, 2; Council of Arles canon 20; I Nicaea canons 4 and 6 etc.

46. This we know, for example, from Polycarp's visit to Rome on the occasion of the paschal controversy (Eusebius, *Eccl. Hist.*, V, 24, 14–17).

47. J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion*, p. 155.

48. J. MEYENDORFF, "The Bishop in the Church", in *Ministers of Christ*, Ed. T. O. Wdel, New York, 1964, p. 157.

nature with ourselves, to maintain Thine Altar, that they may offer unto Thee sacrifice and oblation for all Thy people; do Thou, the same Lord, make this man also, who has been proclaimed a steward of the episcopal grace, to be an imitator of Thee, the true Shepherd..."⁴⁹

According to pseudo-Dionysius, the "high priest" (*archiereys*) possesses the "first" and the "last" order of hierarchy and fulfill every hierarchic consecration.⁵⁰ Symeon of Thesalonika defines the episcopal dignity in terms of its sacramental functions; the bishop for him is the one who performs all sacraments – baptism, chrismation, Eucharist, ordination; he is the one through whom all ecclesiastical acts are perfected.⁵¹ As Eucharist is the ultimate manifestation of God in Christ, Meyendorff rightly says that there cannot be any ministry higher and more decisive than that which presides over the Eucharist. The centrality of the Eucharist, the awareness that the fullness of Christ's Body abides in it and that the episcopal function is the highest in the Church will be the principal foundation of the Eastern opposition to any theological interpretation of supra-episcopal primacies: there cannot be, according to them, any authority "by divine right" over the Eucharist and the bishop who heads the Eucharistic assembly.⁵²

However, the practice of the Eastern Churches was not always consistent with the inner logic of the Eucharistic ecclesiology. As we have

noted earlier, the historical development of the episcopal function – which, on the one hand, after the fourth century delegated the celebration of the Eucharist to presbyters on a permanent basis, on the other, became *de facto* a part of wider administrative structures (provinces, patriarchates) – lost some of its exclusive and direct connections with the sacramental aspect of the life of the Church. But the essential theological and ecclesiological norms were reaffirmed whenever they were directly challenged, and thus remained an essential part of what, for the East, was the tradition of the Church.⁵³

In spite of our sins and deficiencies, we, as the community, become the Church of God and commune in the unity of Christ through the mystery of the Eucharist. It is around and because of the Eucharist that the Church is organized the way it is: eucharistic unity in each place, pastoral duties and preaching performed by the one who also performs the Eucharist, identity of all local Churches in the face of God, full "catholicity" of each of them as the "catholic church" in each place.⁵⁴ Allusion has already been made that the catholicity of the Church as revealed in the Eucharistic community shows that the ultimate essence of catholicity lies in the transcendence of all divisions in Christ. It covers all areas and all dimensions of existence whether human or cosmic, historical or eschatological, spiritual or material, social or individual, etc. As Alexander Schmemmann points out,

49. *Service Book of the Holy Orthodox Catholic Apostolic Church* Ed. I. F. Hapgood, New York, 1922, p. 330.

50. *Hier. Eccl.* V, 5 ; *P. G.* 3, col. 505a.

51. *De sacris ordinationibus* 157 ; *P. G.* 155, col. 364b.

52. J. MEYENDORFF, *Byzantine Theology*, p. 210.

53. *Ibid.*

54. J. MEYENDORFF, *Living Tradition*, New York, 1978, p. 118.

the dichotomies in which life has been placed and conceived, unfortunately to a great extent by Christian tradition itself, represent a betrayal of the catholic outlook so essential to the Church of Christ.⁵⁵ We may think in this respect, for example, of the dichotomy between the "sacred" and the "secular", or between body and soul. The Eucharistic community with its understanding of the Eucharist as a *meal*, with its basic elements being material and not merely spiritual, with its long litanies and supplications in which man's everyday material and physical needs find their place, constitutes the sign of a catholic view in which no dualistic dichotomies can be accepted. Man and the world form a unity in harmony and so do the various dimensions in man's own existence. An ecclesiological catholicity in the life of the eucharistic community suggests and presupposes a *Catholic anthropology* and a *catholic view of existence* in general.⁵⁶

It is important to see the following question under this perspective. How can this view of catholicity be reconciled with the fact that the eucharistic community itself is divided in *orders*, i.e., into categories and classes of people? We know that there

is real problem here, because the divisions which have occurred on this basis are so deep that the Church is still suffering from them.⁵⁷ How can the situation which results from ordination into ministries and orders, into clergy and laity, be transcended in the eucharistic community?

We have mentioned before that all ordinations were at a very early time incorporated in the eucharistic liturgy, and this is of great importance in this respect.⁵⁸ There is no ministry which can be conceived as existing *parallel* to that of Christ but only as *identical* with it. In Her being the Body of Christ, the Church exists as a manifestation of Christ's own ministry and as a reflection of this very ministry in the world. The early Church applied to Christ all forms of ministries that existed. He was the apostle (Heb. 3:1), the prophet (Matt. 23:8; John 13:13), the priest (Heb. 5:6; 8:4; 10:21 2:17), the bishop (1 Peter 2:25; 5:4; Heb. 13:13), the deacon (Rom. 15:8; Luke 22:27; Phil. 2:7). A Christologically understood ministry transcends all categories of priority and separation that may be created by the act of ordination.⁵⁹

Another fundamental point related to this is that no ministry in the

55. A. SCHMEMANN, *sacraments and Orthodoxy*, New York, Herder, 1965, p. 14.

56. J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion*, p. 162.

57. The issue of clericalism and anti-clericalism has been a real problem, especially in the West. The East, by having kept for centuries a eucharistic vision of ecclesiology, did not experience this problem. But recently, due to a replacement of this vision by later ecclesiological ideas, the problem appeared in the East too.

58. It is to be noted here that the present ordination liturgical rites of the Syro-Malabar Church do not incorporate the eucharistic celebration as an integral part of the service. The most ideal form of conferring ordination to any orders is within the Eucharistic celebration. In the present rite which we follow not even the liturgy of the Word is given any importance. The ecclesiological significance of the eucharistic community is a matter of serious consideration. Perhaps in the course of time in order to give an importance to the first Divine Liturgy of the newly ordained the ancient practice must have been changed.

59. J. D. ZIZIOULAS, *Being as Communion*, p. 163.

Church can be understood outside the context of the community. There is no ministry that can stand outside or above the community. Ordination to the ministry in the context of the eucharistic communion implies that the "seal of the Holy Spirit" which is given cannot exist outside the receiver's existential relationship with the community. It is not a mere function to be exercised outside a deep bond with this community. It is a bond of love and its *indelible character* can only be compared with that which is possessed or given by love.⁶⁰ Outside this existential bond with the community it is destined to die.

There is a transcendence of the divisions created by the variety of ministries and the distinctiveness of orders in the Church. According to Zizioulas, it is in this context that the bishop's exclusive right to ordination must be viewed. If he has such a right it is because of his capacity as the head of the Eucharistic community—hence his inability to ordain outside this community—and in relation to his role as the one who offers the entire community in the Eucharist to God.⁶¹ There is no ministry in the Church that can exist *in absolute*.

In the Eucharist the Church becomes truly *the Church of God*—an assembly of disciples, "born again" in Baptism through the Spirit and united to Christ, the Bridegroom of his Church. Meyendorff has another conclusion based on the eucharistic ecclesiology. He states that the biblical and liturgical image which underlines the Eucharistic mystery is the *feminine* image of the assembly and the *masculine* image of the Bridegroom, "represented" in the person of the celebrant, or president who stands in the

place of Christ. Hence according to him, there is no doubt that this is the main theological and ecclesiological basis for the fact that Christian tradition, since the very beginning of the apostolic Church, has ordained men for the ministry of the *episcopos*, which was fulfilled first exclusively by the bishops, later also regularly by presbyters.⁶²

Coming to the contemporary debates on the possibility of women to priesthood, we may observe that it is certainly a reaction—in many ways justified—against the monopolization of power in the hands of the male clergy, and the decline of the sense that the priesthood of Christ is also expressed in the "royal priesthood" of all the faithful. However, as Meyendorff thinks, the whole conflict belongs to the level of historical institutional imperfections of the visible Church, not to the level of biblical theology and ecclesiology. Indeed the laity in general (not only women) have been largely excluded, not only from power-sharing, but also from active involvement in the Eucharist and the liturgy in general. More recently a secularized approach to the Church has led to a division between administration and finances on the one side, and the "sacred things" on the other, with the latter reserved for the clergy. Meyendorff suggests that it is this rising clericalism which must be eliminated before a clarification can be found for the *role of women* in the church. It is indeed an undeniable fact that women were (and are) suffering unjustifiable discrimination. But Christianity *as such* is hardly responsible for this state of affairs; more often, Old Testament conceptions surviving in Christian

60. Ibid. p. 165. The Byzantine service of ordination to the priesthood is in many parts identical with that of matrimony. This suggests an understanding of the ministry as a bond between the ordained and the community.

61. Ibid.

62. J. MEYENDORFF, "Christ's Humanity", p. 38.

milieus and the influence of non-Christian cultures, including Islam have played a decisive role.⁶³ Virgin Mary is glorified by the Church for the *human freedom* with which she made the *fiat voluntas tua*. The New Testament credits women as being the first witnesses of Resurrection and the Church calls them – liturgically – “equal to the apostles” (isapostoloi). It is certainly an urgent matter for the Church today to rediscover and redefine, in terms of contemporary needs and requirements, the full meaning of the “Royal priesthood” of all the faithful and, more particularly, how this priesthood can be exercised by men and women in their respective – and not necessarily interchangeable – abilities, what ministries (particularly the diaconate) used to be open to both sexes and how they were actually exercised. Thus in the context of a healthy rejuvenation and revival of the entire structure of the ecclesial body – the people of God as a whole – the functions of various ministries would become clearer.

Conclusion

Eastern tradition understood Eucharist as mystery of true and real communion with Christ. While speaking of the Eucharist Chrysostom insists that “Christ even now is present, even now operates”;⁶⁴ and Gregory of Nyssa, in spite of the platonizing tendencies of his thought, stands for the same view of the Eucharist as a mystery of real “participation” in the glorified Body of Christ, the seed of immortality.⁶⁵ Participation in these sources of immortality and unity must be a constant concern for every Christian. For the Eastern theologians, the Eucharist is Christ’s transfigured, life-giving, but

still human, body, en-hypostasized in the Logos. In the Eucharist man participates in the glorified humanity of Christ, which is not the “essence of God”, but a humanity still consubstantial to man and available to him as food and drink. One never finds the category of “essence” used by Eastern theologians in a Eucharistic context.

On this point Eastern Eucharistic piety stands in vivid contrast to the late medieval Western practice of the veneration of the Host, an expression, on the level of spirituality, of the doctrine of transubstantiation. In the East, no philosophical terminology was applied specifically to the Eucharistic mystery, which was not considered in isolation from the Christological and Ecclesiological facts: the transfiguration of the Body of Christ, the “change” which occurred in it after the resurrection and which, through the power of the Spirit, is also at work in the entire Body of the baptized faithful, that is, in the “total” Christ.

The term transubstantiation (meto-usiosis) appears only in the writings of the *Latinophrones* of the thirteenth century, and is nothing but a direct translation from Latin. The first Eastern author to use it is Gennadios Scholarius.⁶⁶ Meyendorff summarises the Eastern position stating that the Eucharist is neither a symbol to be “contemplated” from outside nor an “essence” distinct from humanity, but Jesus Himself, the risen Lord, “made known through the breaking of the bread” (Lk. 24:35). Eastern theologians rarely speculated beyond this realistic and soteriological affirmation of the Eucharistic presence as that of the glorified humanity of Christ.

Thomas J. Thumpeparampil O. F.M. Cap

63. Ibid. pp. 38–39

64. *Hom. in II Tim.* 2, 4; *P. G.*, 62, col. 612,

65. *Catechetical oration*, 37. ed. Strawly, p. 152.

66. *De sacramentali corpore Christi*, eds. S. Petit and M. Jugie, I, Paris, 1928. pp. 126, 134.

Humanity and the natural world in the Syriac tradition*

In the light of various ecological disasters which human beings have brought about in recent years we can no longer overlook the fact that the attitude and relationship of each one of us as human beings to the rest of the created world is a matter of urgent concern. It is often the case that new light can be shed upon familiar topics when these are viewed from a different and unfamiliar perspective. The Syriac Orient, which constitutes a discrete Christian tradition alongside the more familiar Latin West and Greek East, can provide one such perspective.

Three Witnesses

For our present purposes it will suffice to take three very different writers as our main representatives of this tradition.

First in time comes St. Ephrem,¹ who combined the roles of poet and

theologian with great insight and originality. Although he belongs to the fourth century, living all his life in what is now south-east Turkey (then the easternmost part of the Roman empire), his relevance for the late twentieth century was prophetically indicated in 1920 when Pope Benedict XV proclaimed him a Doctor of the Church, over half a century before his works received a full and reliable edition, primarily at the hands of Dom Edmund Beck. St Ephrem belongs to a period before the Syriac Church had become deeply hellenized in its mode of theological thinking, and before monasticism in the forms in which we now know it had taken root.

Our second witness, St Isaac of Nineveh (or St Isaac the Syrian, as he is better known)² lived only three centuries later, yet he already belongs to a very different world. A native of

* Paper given at the Fellowship conference of 1989; reprint from *Sobornost/Eastern Churches Review* 12:2 (1990), pp. 131–142. Plates on pp. 134 and 137 are not reproduced here.

1. For an introduction to St Ephrem, see my *The Spiritual World Vision of St. Ephrem* (Rome 1985). There are two recent collections of English translations, K. E. McVey, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns* (Classics of Western Spirituality 1989), and my *St Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise* (Crestwood 1990).
2. An excellent introduction, and complete English translation from the eighth–ninth century Greek version of St Isaac's works, by Dana Miller, can be found in *The Ascetical Homilies of St Isaac the Syrian* (Boston 1984). A

Qatar, he spent most of his adult life in Iraq where the Arab conquest had recently taken place. He belonged to the Church of the East (opprobriously labelled as 'Nestorian' by the rest of the Christian world); this had existed from its beginnings outside the confines of the Roman empire.

For our third witness we jump to the twentieth century and to India, to the contemporary writer Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios (Paul Verghese), author of the slim but important book *The Human Presence: Ecological Spirituality and the Age of the Spirit* (1978).

The Biblical Starting Point

In an influential paper entitled 'The historic roots of our ecologic crisis', published in 1967 in the periodical *Science*,³ Lynn White argued that 'Judaean-Christian theology', laying its foundations on the second half of that seminal verse Genesis 1:26 (together with verse 28), was to blame for Western society's 'ruthlessness towards nature'. Is it really so? A look at the history of Jewish and Christian interpretation of the injunction 'to fill and master the earth' in fact suggests that it has hardly ever seriously been taken as a license to exploit nature. Rather has it usually been understood in a very different

way.⁴ This applies notably in the Syriac tradition.

What does the biblical text actually say? In the first place it is important to notice that in both verses 26 and 28 the injunction to 'have dominion over the animal world' and to 'fill and master the earth' (verse 28 only) immediately follows reference to the creation of humanity in the image of God. In verse 26, in particular, the 'dominion' is expressly a consequence of humanity's being created in God's image. The exact sense of the Hebrew verb used is not entirely clear, and this is reflected in the variety of renderings in both ancient and modern translations. Thus NEB has 'rule', REB and RSV, 'have dominion over'. Of especial interest here is the translation of the Syriac Bible, the Peshitta. This follows the Jewish Targum and has 'let us make humanity in our image and according to our likeness, and [as a result] they shall have authority over the fish [...]'. The same verb reappears in verse 28, in conjunction with 'multiply [...] fill the earth and trample it, and have authority over the fish [...]', where the Syriac verb 'trample' is identical with the Hebrew ('subdue' or 'master' in most modern translations).

The Fathers, when they commented on this passage, already sought to explore the implications of the link

translation from the Syriac original of the first six homilies, made by Mary Hansbury, has recently appeared: *St Isaac of Nineveh: On Ascetical Life* (Crestwood 1989). There is also a collection of sixty short excerpts in A. M. Allchin, *The Heart of Compassion: Daily Readings with St Isaac of Syria* (London 1989). For some further works, recently discovered, see my 'St Isaac of Nineveh: Some newly-discovered works', *Sobornost / ECR* 8:1 (1986), pp. 28-33 = *Studies in Syriac Spirituality* (Syrian Churches Series 13 ed. J. Vellian; 1988), pp. 109-113.

3. *Science* 155 (1967), pp. 1203-7.

4. See, for example, J. Cohen, 'The Bible, Man and Nature in the history of western thought: a call for reassessment', *Journal of Religion* 65 (1985), pp. 155-72, and his 'Be Fertile and Increase, Fill the Earth and Master it'. *The Ancient and Medieval Career of a Biblical Text* (Ithaca and London 1989).

between the 'authority' conferred and the creation of humanity in the image of God. Some compared humanity as God's image in creation to the statue of a king. The presence of the statue serves as a symbol or token of the king's authority, and clearly, if it is to serve this purpose, the statue has to be recognisable. Such an understanding may be considered unduly static, and it leaves out a vital constituent element of this authority, namely free will. A more dynamic understanding of the verse thus sees humanity as God's agent or representative within creation, an agent to whom authority has been delegated. This of course means that the authority must be exercised properly, and not be taken as a ticket for tyranny: indeed, the very opposite is the case, for any proper exercise of authority should inspire love, and not hate. The fifth-century Syriac poet Narsai combines both ideas when he says:

A king is held in honour by means
of his image when he is far away,
as though he were near;

the Creator wished to make rational
beings wise,
so in the world — the city of the
Kingdom — the Creator placed his
image,

and with the visible image he indicates
the power of his hiddenness.
In constituting them, the Creator
fixed created beings with his image,
so that, through the example of
God's love for Adam, they might
imitate his love.⁵

We can observe another way of making the same general point in the Fathers' frequent use of the idea of the image of God in humanity as a mirror. Here we need to remember

that in antiquity mirrors were not made of glass but of metal: if they were to function properly, they had to be kept in a state of high polish. This 'mirror', consisting of God's image in humanity, was regularly connected with the whole course of salvation history. The following main stages were involved:

- at the creation of humanity the mirror is polished and so functions as intended;
- at the fall the image / mirror becomes encrusted with rust and dirt;
- with the incarnation the situation is remedied in potential, since the incarnate Christ is the true image or mirror, who fully reflects the Father;
- through the sacraments of baptism and the eucharist humanity is provided with the potential for cleansing the image / mirror: whether someone actually does so is a matter of her or his free will.

It is not difficult to think of suitable modern counterparts to this image of the bronze mirror in need of polishing. The underlying theme will always be the ideal of cooperation between God and humanity, a continuous process of a synergy for which Mary can be seen as providing the basic model.⁶

To the changing condition of the mirror over the course of salvation history is linked the character of the 'authority' exercised. Thus, prior to the fall, the authority is exercised as God intended. Subsequent to the fall, however, the authority is abused, and consequently became less effective.

5. Narsai's Homily 4 on Creation, ed. P. Gignoux, *Patrologia Orientalis* 34 (1968).

6. For this aspect see my 'Mary and the Eucharist: an oriental perspective', *Sobornost / ECR* 1:2 (1979), pp. 50-9 = *Studies in Syriac Spirituality*, pp. 33-40.

Then, thanks to the incarnation and the potential thereby given to humanity to restore the image, the saints (that is, those whose cooperation with God has brought about the restoration of the image within themselves) have once again been enabled to exercise this authority rightly.

St. Ephrem, in his commentary on Genesis, illustrates the consequences of the right exercise of humanity's authority over the animal world when he tells how God brought the animals and birds to Adam in order to show

what peace there was between the beasts and Adam before Adam transgressed the commandment. For they came to him as to a loving shepherd, passing before him fearlessly, flock by flock in their families and species. They did not fear him, nor did they tremble at one another: predators passed by, with their prey fearlessly following.⁷

This paradisiacal harmony between humanity and the animal world, characterised by a relationship of love inspired by the correct use of the divine gift of authority, is lost at the fall. But as is implied by the many stories about saints and wild animals it can potentially be recovered in exceptional cases. St Isaac the Syrian describes the effect of sanctity on animals as follows:

The humble person approaches wild animals and the moment they catch sight of him their ferocity is tamed: they come up and cling to him as to their Master, wagging their tails and licking his hands and feet. They

scent, as coming from that person, the same fragrance that came from Adam before the transgression, the time when they were gathered together before him and he gave them names in paradise. This scent was taken away from us. But Christ has renewed it and given it back to us at his coming. It is this which has sweetened the fragrance of humanity.⁸

Two points are important to notice in all this. Firstly, there is a conditional element implied in the giving to humanity of authority over the animal world. And secondly, there is a reciprocal element to this authority. Rightly exercised, it will instill a love which results in harmony between ruler and ruled; wrongly exercised it instills hatred and sows disharmony.

This conditional element implied by the words of Genesis 1:26 is nicely brought out in a rabbinic pun on the Hebrew word that lies behind the Peshitta's 'have authority'. Thus in a saying attributed to Rabbi Joseph of Kfar Hanan, God is made to say, 'Of him who is in our image and likeness I say *urdu* ('let them have dominion', from the verb *radah*). But of him who is not in our image and likeness I say *yerdu* ('let them descend' [= from their position of authority], from the verb *yarad*). Further, let him who is in our image and likeness rule over that which is not in our image and likeness.

Genesis 1:26 is primarily concerned with the relationship of humanity to the animal world. But frequently the Fathers see this as also applicable to our relationship to the whole of creation. Thus Martyrius, who belongs to

7. Translation in *St Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise*, p. 203.

8. *The Heart of Compassion*, p. 41 (contrast p. 7, on 'the stink of fallen Adam').

9. Quoted in M. M. Kasher, *Encyclopedia of Biblical interpretation I* (New York 1953), p. 62.

a generation before St Isaac, writes in his Book of Perfection:

This is how we were established by God in the world: having first been fashioned out of dust, like the rest of natural beings, he clothed us in the beauty of his image, allowing us to acquire the radiance of his likeness, and he adorned us with the glory of his divinity: indeed, he made us second gods upon earth, giving us authority over creation, like himself.

Humanity and 'nature'

All too often the terms 'humanity' and 'nature' are found contrasted, as though there was a relationship of opposition, if not of outright enmity and hostility between them. Such a view is not only misleading but wrong, since on the one hand it leaves out of consideration God, the creator of both, and on the other, it fails to see humanity as an integral part of 'nature'. For both constitute 'creation'. The basic contrast should thus be seen as being between God and creation, and it is only as a subordinate distinction, within creation, that humanity is set alongside (rather than over against) the rest of creation. Seen from this perspective, the message implied by Genesis 1:26 is that the relationship between God and creation should properly be reflected by humanity, created in God's image, and the animal world (and by extension, the rest of creation). And since the relationship of God to his creation is essentially one of love (a point that is brought out on many occasions by St Isaac), this means that the relationship of humanity to the rest of creation should also be one of love. In other words, the humanity's

role turns out to be more one of mediation than of domination.

It is important to keep in mind that the popular modern usage of the term 'nature' as something quite separate from humanity is misguided, and to note that there is no word for nature in the Hebrew Bible. Among the Syriac Fathers, where the term 'nature' (*kyana*) does occur, it will normally mean either creation as a whole, or human nature. Even more problematic and ambiguous is the term 'world'.

What does 'world' mean?

It is often asked, is Christianity world-affirming or world-denying? At baptism we, or godparents on our behalf, renounced 'the world'. Clearly this does not mean the rejection of the material world, that is, creation, as something evil; nor is it a rejection of what is implicit in the title of the Fellowship's 1989 conference, 'Christian responsibility in the world'. It only requires a little reflection to realise that the term 'world' has at least two senses, one negative ('this world' in the New Testament) and the other positive. In every specific context we need to know which sense is intended. As St Isaac said:

When you hear of 'keeping distant from the world' or 'abandoning the world' or 'being pure of the world', you will first of all need to learn what the term 'world' actually means.¹¹

Fortunately Isaac goes on to provide some definitions in these particular cases: 'In sum, "the world" means a way of life that is concerned only with the body, and a mentality which

10. Ed. de Halleux, iii. 20.

11. Ed. Bedjan, pp. 17-18 (= tr. Hansbury, p. 39). Where references are to Bedjan's edition the translations are mine.

is concerned only with the flesh.'¹² Elsewhere he writes:

By 'the world' I mean the passions which are engendered by distraction. When these are born and come to maturity, they become sins and kill a person. As children are not born without a mother so passions are not born without distraction of the mind, and sin is not committed without converse with the passions.¹³

Thus in St. Isaac, and in most of the Fathers, the term 'world' represents the fallen aspects of our human nature, and this is the 'world' which we reject at baptism. Accordingly in the writings of the Fathers we find that the 'world' in this negative sense is an object of great contempt, often depicted as a prison or a harlot. But St. Isaac also uses the term in other senses, as when he says, 'God has created for your sake two worlds, one as a teacher, and for a while your chastiser, but the other as your ancestral home and your eternal inheritance.'¹⁴ This 'other world' or 'ancestral home' (implying paradise regained) is the 'new world' of the resurrection life which can occasionally be anticipated in this world by the saints who make real the potential for a life of holiness which all are given at baptism. 'This 'new world' is not so much a return to the primordial paradise of the pre-fall state, but to the eschatological paradise, the attainment of which had been the initial intention of God when he created Adam and Eve, and of which they would have held worthy had they obeyed what

Ephrem was to call God's 'tiny commandment.'¹⁵

In this passage by Isaac the first of the two 'worlds' which he mentions corresponds fairly closely to modern usage, and means our life on earth as part of this created world. Dana Miller's translation, from which I quoted, describing the first world as a 'teacher', was made from the Greek. But the Syriac original calls this world a 'school'. Elsewhere Isaac speaks of the natural created world as a 'book' from which humanity can read—thus anticipating the popular western topos of 'the book of nature': 'the first book which was given to rational beings was the natural created world.'¹⁶ The second book, of course, was the Bible. In order to understand how the book of nature serves as a school we need to move back in time to St. Ephrem.

Creation as a witness to God

Of all the Syriac Fathers it is undoubtedly St. Ephrem who offers the most dynamic vision of the world (in the sense of creation as a whole). A theme which he frequently introduces is that of God's two witnesses, 'nature' (the natural created world) and 'the book' (scripture). Thus, for example, in the cycle of Hymns on Paradise we find (5:2):

In his book Moses described
the creation of the natural world
[literally: nature],
so that both natural world and
his book

12. Ed. Bedjan, p. 10 (= tr. Hansbury, p. 40)

13. Tr. Miller, p. 235.

14. Tr. Miller, p. 47 (cf. Hansbury, p. 90).

15. Translation in *St Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns on Paradise*, ed. and tr. Sebastian Brock (Crestwood 1990), p. 211.

16. Ed. Bedjan, p. 61 (= tr. Hansbury, p. 81).

might testify to the Creator,
the natural world, through
humanity's use of it,
the book, through their reading
of it.¹⁷

Bristling under the surface of both nature and scripture, but invisible to the physical eye, lie innumerable pointers to God in the form of 'symbols' (the Syriac literally means 'mysteries') and 'types'. The purpose of these is to link creation with the heavenly world, with the various stages of salvation history, and with the sacraments, infusing meaning into everything. They also – and this is important – indicate the interconnectedness of everything in creation. These symbols are only visible to 'the eye of faith'. But the more illumined by faith that eye is, the more it will see of the 'hidden power' or 'meaning' that is inherent within the whole of creation. Thanks to this perception, the created world will itself take on, in the eyes of the beholder, its inherently sacramental character, and this in turn requires that it be used and treated with reverence – a reverence analogous to that requisite for the Church's sacraments.¹⁸

Thus for St Ephrem a right attitude to the created world will lead to the right use made of it. It is not difficult to see that this is basically a matter of the right exercise of the divine gift of free will and the use we make of the 'authority' given to humanity in Genesis 1:26. As Ephrem regularly points out, this right attitude is essentially one of an awesome wonder that finds expression in thanks-

giving and praise. Conversely, where the attitude is wrong and where greed or arrogance is present, the inevitable outcome will be the abuse and misuse of this 'authority'.

All this is not just a matter of individual concern, for one of the consequences of the interconnectedness of everything within creation is that moral evil and the misuse of freewill disturbs the cosmic harmony and order. Ephrem found support for this in the biblical narrative of Genesis 3:18.

The sprouting of the thorns
testified to the novel sprouting of
wrong actions,

for thorns did not sprout
as long as wrongdoing had not yet
burst forth;

but once there had peered out
hidden wrong choices made by free
will,

then the visible thorns began to
peer out from the earth.

The same applies to human injustice, where the consequence can go well beyond the immediate victims of that injustice, as Ephrem observes on the basis of 1 Kings 21:

Because Jezebel defrauded truth
the earth refused its produce:
the womb of the earth held back,
as a reproof,

the seeds that the farmer had lent it;
the earth suffocated the seeds within
itself

because its inhabitants had deceit-
fully held back truth.

17. Translation in *Hymns on Paradise*, p. 102.

18. The same approach is implicit in a striking passage in the newly discovered texts by St Isaac: 'For every event, natural being and utterance in this creation there is a sanctuary and a Holy of Holies' (Ch. xxx. 10 in my forthcoming translation). See also my 'World and Sacrament in the Syriac Fathers', *Sobornost* VI:10 (1974), pp. 685–96 = *Studies in Syriac Spirituality*, pp. 1–12.

We need only recollect how often in our own time greed for quick profits in agriculture has likewise resulted in the earth's infertility to see the validity of the point which Ephrem is making.

Sin in the form of the misuse of our divinely given free will and authority, thus leads to disharmony both in human society and in creation as a whole. Nevertheless the potential for recovery is always present, provided that we realise this and seek to put this potential into practice. St Ephrem expresses it this way:

One person falls sick – and so another
can visit and help him;

one person starves – and so another
can provide him with food and
give him life;

one person does something stupid,
but he can be instructed by another,
and thereby grow.

In this way the world can recover:
tens of thousands of hidden ways
are to be found

ready to assist us.

Following St Paul, Ephrem uses the image of human society as a body:

For just as in the case of the limbs of the body, their individual needs are fulfilled by one another, so too the inhabitants of the world can fill in the common need for the common excess. We should rejoice in this need on the part of us all, for out of it can be born harmony for us all. [.....]. Even in the case of domestic animals, seeing that we have a need for them, we should take care of them. Clearly our need for everything should bind us with a love for everything.¹⁹

I understand St Ephrem to be saying that there exists an inherent interconnectedness between everyone and everything, and that this is to be found on three 'levels': within humanity as a whole; within creation as a whole (thus including between humanity and the environment); and between the material world and the spiritual world. And of course all of these three levels of interconnectedness are themselves interconnected, thus creating a vast multi-dimensional spider's web. The implications of this are just as important today if not more so than they were in Ephrem's time. Since everyone and everything is interconnected, every individual has both a responsibility and a potential role to play in the process of recovery from the disharmony caused by human misuse of free will. It is worth pointing out how consonant with Ephrem's thought are things which Frijthof Capra (1983) has recently said about 'the universal interconnectedness and interdependence of all phenomena, and the intrinsically dynamic nature of reality'.²⁰

A modern voice from the Syriac Churches

In his book *The Human Presence* Metropolitan Paulos Mar Gregorios points out the need to correct our world picture, very much along the lines illustrated above, where St Isaac and St Ephrem were used as a basis. As it happens, Mar Gregorios, while he seeks to make the same sort of points, prefers to use two Greek Fathers – more or less exact contemporaries of St Ephrem and St Isaac – namely, St Gregory of Nyssa and St Maximus the Confessor. Mar Gregorios' choice of Greek Fathers, instead of any of

19. This passage, along with the previous ones, is taken from the section 'St Ephrem's ecological vision' in *The Luminous Eye*, pp. 136–40.

20. *The Turning Point* (London 1983), p. 330.

the Syriac Fathers from his own tradition, is doubly of interest for our present concern. In the first place, and most importantly, this points to the essential unity of early Christian understanding of humanity's place and role within creation. This is by no means something confined to the Syriac Orient. Furthermore, proponents could equally be found in writers belonging to the Latin West. Secondly, and more incidentally, Mar Gregorios' choice of Fathers illustrates the point made at the outset of this paper, that it is often helpful to view familiar problems through the spectacles of writers outside one's own particular tradition.

It is, above all, significant that when Mar Gregorios turns his attention to what the views of St Gregory and St Maximus mean for us today, he too, like St Ephrem before him, sees the necessity for a fundamental change in attitude, a need to acquire a new perception of the created world around us, and of our place within it. Significant too is his emphasis that this altered attitude is not to be regarded as a substitute for, but as an essential concomitant to, modern scientific knowledge:

Here a totally fresh attitude is necessary, one which is different

from our objectifying analyzing technique. We shall call it the *reverent-receptive* attitude. It is the attitude of being open to fundamental reality as it manifests itself to us through visible, audible, sensible realities in the creation. This fresh attitude is not to be adopted as an alternative to the scientific-technological attitude but as a necessary complement. Without this combination the scientific-technological attitude becomes as harmful as the other attitude becomes obscurantist and self-deceiving.²¹

Clearly such a change of attitude—with its consequent alteration in our life-style—cannot be imposed upon others. For it needs to be a choice made by free will. Herein lies a responsibility which individual Christians and Christian communities as a whole should be ready to assume: by seeking to reflect God's own love and justice in these 'mirrors' of the divine image in which all are created, we urgently need to provide models of many different kinds which will draw others and help them to respond with a similar change of perception. For we have received nothing less than an invitation from God himself to cooperate with him in the creation of the new world.

Sebastian Brock

21. *The Human Presence ...* (New York 1978), pp. 89–90.

Book Reviews

J. N. M. Wijngaards, *Come and see: living experience of Jesus Christ* (Bangalore: Theological Publications of India, 2 ed., 1983, pp. 254)

Wijngaards is a famous and prolific spiritual writer. As the subtitle indicates, this book colourfully unfolds the mystery of experiencing Christ. It is divided into three sections of 5, 6 and 4 chapters respectively. In the first section he asserts the reality that personal experience of God is not a privilege of a few who have apparitions and mystical visions, rather it is the patrimony of every Christian, for Christ has promised it. He rejects the Freudian contention of religious experience as "subjective projection of the mind" or that of Erich Fromm as "an illusion" and he proves that science cannot replace religion. The whole universe is a sign of God's presence and every religion incorporates some genuine religious experience. But Christian God experience is at par excellence for, in Christ, we meet God in a more direct and outspoken fashion. Early Christians felt being "captured" by Christ—sensing his power and being guided by him, they experienced a transformation in themselves. In the second section, the author narrates the actual experiences of saints and mystics. It is very interesting to read how Symeon the new theologian asserted an experiential theology in the face of a predominantly academic scholarship of a glib theology and how scriptural metaphors helped Therese of Lisieux, Francis of Assisi and Teresa of Avila to experience God and to live the Gospel radically. It really fascinates to read the life of Charles de Foucauld, who experienced Christ and witnessed a simple Gospel living among Muslims, and that of Simone Weil, a dynamic and self-asserting Jewish woman who never received Christian baptism, experienced Christ through the poem, "Love" and later through the prayer "Our Father". In the third section Wijngaards illustrates the practical steps for God experience. In order to experience God one need to find and set aside some time every day and some days a year or two for silence, reflection and mental prayer and he advocates Francis de Sales' five steps of meditation for the beginners. He stresses on interiorization of scripture and asks the reader to have the attitude of seeing the objects of this world as symbols of transcendent realities. Finally, the author indicates the moments of affliction, solitary prayer, desert experience, eucharistic celebration the healing touch of Christ through the sacraments of reconciliation and the anointing of the sick, listening to others and experiencing unselfish love and service of others as seven occasions of ordinary experience of Christ. This book grips the reader and it is a very good guide to the novices to priesthood and religious life and the religiously serious minded lay people and all who are wanting God experience or finding their prayer life dry and boring.

Jose Poovānikunnel, C. Ss. R.

The Book "*Aquinas' Summa*" by *Edward J. Gratsch*, S. T. D. and published by T P I. Bangalore (1985) contains twenty two chapters in 305 pages, apportioned into three parts with a variable number of subtitles apiece. *Structurally*, the arrangement of the subject closely resembles "*summa Theologiae* itself," having the same format and form of division.

The long introduction informs one of the person, life and works of Aquinas in general. While God is Infinite and Uncreated, creatures—Spiritual beings, Corporal beings and human beings—are produced by God from no pre-existing material. Each of these classes receives ample consideration in chapters five, six and seven respectively. The final chapter of part I scrutinizes God's government of the universe and its finality.

The former section of part two regards God in five chapters as the ultimate end of human activities and in a general way, the acts by which people tend unto or away from this end.

The latter portion of the second part which discusses human activity elaborates on the seven virtues: three theological and four cardinal virtues. The second part concludes with a profound consideration of active and contemplative lives, the episcopacy and religious state.

The third part fittingly takes up the Saviour himself, the sacraments and eternal life to which believers are beckoned through resurrection. The relation of the third part to *Summa* is that of the New Testament to the Old. While studying the incarnate Word, the second person, he also deals his deeds and death leading to ascension.

The theme of Chapters 20 and 21 are sacraments—the effective signs by which Church dispenses salvation. Three of them—Sacraments of initiation are—examined separately while sacraments of reconciliation, anointing of the sick, holy orders and matrimony are explained in Chapter 22.

At life's sunset three things await men: death, judgement and reward. Besides heaven and hell, the final chapters also speak of Limbo of the unbaptized—a place devoid of pain and Divine vision, and purgatory where the person is purged of the unforgiven venial sins.

Scientifically written, the pleasure in the book lies in the way Fr. Gratsch circulated subtle contents of *Summa*—unusual readability and clarity—a rarity to be found with high scholarship.

The book has worth as long as *Summa* has, which is proven through centuries. Throughout history esp. after 15 c. Church has had to cope with those who would recast its teaching in the mould of some fleeting intellectual fashion like existentialism or liberation theology. Always then, Thomicism remained as a useful reference and yardstick. Long after have such "isms" become historical footnotes, *Summa* of Aquinas survived and Church will still be teaching his theology through such good books as "*Aquinas' Summa*."

Christian Living according to Vatican II. Moral Theology Today. By *George V. Lobo s. j.* Theological publications in India, Bangalore, India, 1991, IX + 455.

This book on General Moral Theology is a contribution to the vast section of materials on Moral Theology by an Indian Moral Theologian. In the words of the author, **Christian Living** is addressed to "a wider audience than students of Theology. It is meant to be a guide to Christian living in the spirit of Vatican II".

Almost all the moralists of the Catholic world since Vatican Council II have contributed their share to the renewal of Moral Theology according to the spirit of Vatican II. The renewal started with the Council continues even today and Fr. Lobo has contributed his share.

Christian Living is a Book on General Moral Theology. Fr. Lobo has tried to interpret the fundamental principles and problems of Moral thinking from a spirit of Vatican Council. In 21 chapters he has done justice to his job. The first chapter is a short historical overview of Moral Theology followed by a biblical analysis in chapters three and four. The specificity of christian ethics, an important topic, is discussed in chapter five. The remaining chapters can be seen as an attempt at reinterpreting Moral Theology according to the spirit of the Council.

Morality is person-centred and not act-centred. It is also Christ-centred. These are the modern emphases in Moral thinking. Fr. Lobo tries to point to the danger of a dichotomy between morality and spirituality in the traditional morality and emphasizes the primacy of love in christian living.

In chapter 11 and the following he discusses the issues connected with decision-making, viz. the role of law-natural law, canon law, civil law-, moral absolutes, human act etc. The last two chapters are on sin and reconciliation.

The select bibliography and the subject index at the end are very useful for further reading and a quick reference to the book. The Selection of the topics and their presentation make an easy reading possible. Fr. Lobo has surely contributed his share to the Moral Theological thinking in India particular and the world at large

Fr. Wilson Ukken

Parish Priests and Marriage Cases Revised edition according to CIC By *G. Taylor W. F. & E. de Bekker W. F.* Theological Publications in India, Bangalore, 1993, XVI + 200

Now a days marriage cases are on the increase and consequently the marriage tribunals are overloaded with cases. Parish priests as the pastors of the faithful have much to do to alleviate the sorrows of the broken families and to help them to find a way out. In this context the knowledge of canon law especially the laws dealing with marriage and matrimonial reliefs are of greater importance to pastors of the flock. Here Frs. G. Taylor and E. de Bekker

offer us a valuable guide in the **Parish Priests and Marriage Cases** which is supposed to be a pastoral companion for every parish priest as the name indicates.

The present book deals with three kinds of marriage cases, viz., nullity cases, dissolution cases and other marriage cases like presumed death of the spouse, possession and good faith cases. Corresponding to these categories the book is divided into three parts. The first part dealing with the nullity cases have 19 chapters. The meaning of christian marriage, the nature of nullity cases, impediments for marriage, grounds for nullity cases, the process of validation of marriage, the ordinary process of presenting the case to the marriage tribunal and the marriage between two unbaptised persons are the themes in this part. The second part of the book having 8 chapters deals with dissolution cases. What is the meaning of dissolution of marriage, who has the power for the dissolution, role of the priest, dissolution of marriage by the Church and its effects before the civil law etc. are topics of the first chapter. The subsequent chapters deal with dissolution of a ratified but non-consummated marriage, principle of c. 1150 and its three applications, Pauline privilege, cases of the convert who has several unbaptised spouses, cases in which spouses cannot re-establish conjugal life by reason of captivity or persecution, marriage contracted between two unbaptised persons of insolubly doubtful validity and dissolution of marriage by special concession in favour of faith. The third part having three chapters deal with cases of presumed death of the spouse, possession cases and cases of good faith.

Explanations of the canons, examples elucidating the application of canons, the reference to the 1917 code and to several documents of the Holy See exemplar of the formularies etc. given in this book are of great help to deal with the marriage cases. All the marriage cases begin in the parish and the parish priests have to handle them and sometimes they can be solved at the parish level. The role of the parish priests in handling these cases are explained precisely in the book. So the purpose of this book as the authors point out in the introduction "is to explain for the sake of those engaged in parish work how to handle such cases either in preparing them to be sent to a higher level, like the diocesan marriage tribunal or even to the Holy See, or in instructing the proper procedure to be followed for their completion at parish level". This book will serve as a hand-book for the pastors in their ministry. The authors have the credit of helping the pastors and through them the couples of the broken marriages. I wish and pray that this book brings these couples peace and solace by finding a way out from their problems.

Fr. George Madathikandathil

News

Greek Bishops urge Catholics to be loyal to the Pope

The Episcopal Conference of Greece in its pastoral letter urged their people to remain united and loyal to the Pope. This appeal came in the context of unrest in the former Yugoslavia. Instead of all christian communities together glorifying God, they have engaged in mutual accusations. They have abandoned their spirit of unity which they had during the communist persecution, exile and torture and have now engaged in slandering one another, speaking ill of and insulting each other's churches, especially the Catholic Church. This accusation has gone to the extent of accusing the Pope of Rome. This inflicts real spiritual suffering and causes scandal. The bishops see this situation as a new form of the passion of Jesus, and request the faithful to remain steadfast in the Catholic faith of the ancestors and to the Pope, the First pastor of the Church of Christ.

The bishops also recall the many calumnies that have been spoken and published against the Pope and explain that they are all baseless. No other spiritual or political leader of any country of the world has taken so many steps as the Pope of Rome has to end the war in the former Yugoslavia, to respect the human rights of every citizen and every people to build a just peace, to promote justice and freedom among all peoples.

Holy Family of Nazareth Sisters commemorated

On 1 August 1993 the martyrdom of 11 sisters of the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Family of Nazareth was commemorated in Nowogrodek (in former northeastern Poland, now in Belarus). The 11 sisters were martyred during the regime of Hitler by his Gestapo on 31 July 1943. They were shot and buried for their faith in a common grave. Their process for canonisation is complete and the report has been submitted to the concerned congregation in Vatican.

Archbishop Pablo Puente, Nuncio in Kuwait

Archbishop Pablo Puente is the new Apostolic Nuncio in Kuwait. He has begun his mission on July 7, 1993 by presenting the Letters of Credence to His Highness Sheikh Jaber El-Ahmad El-Jaber Es-Sabbah, Emir of Kuwait.

Oriental Institute of Religious Studies India, Publications,

Vadavathoor, P. B. 1, Kottayam 686010.

JUST OUT OF THE PRESS

EVANGELIZATION IN INDIA: A Theological Analysis of the Missionary Role of the Syro-Malabar Church in the Light of the Vatican II and Post-conciliar Documents, OIRSI 162, Vadavathoor, Kottayam, 1993, pp. 586.

By Fr. Xavier Kochuparampil

This book is the doctoral thesis defended at Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, Belgium. It has five chapters and deals with the question of evangelization in India by the Syro-Malabar Church which provides about 70% of the missionary personnel in India. Fundamental to this study are two principles: evangelization is an ecclesial act; Church is a communion of Churches. The study bases itself on the documents of Vatican II, the documents of the Synod of Bishops 1974 and the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Nuntiandi* of Pope Paul VI. The Church is missionary by nature. Evangelization is her grace and vocation.

Applying these principles to the Indian situation, the author tries to show that the present crisis in the missionary situation is not purely missiological but ecclesiological. The restrictions imposed on the jurisdictional rights of the Syro-Malabar Church goes against the principles of evangelization and the missionary consciousness of the Universal Church. To remedy this crisis, this study offers a theological means: the application of the principle of communion ecclesiology to the Indian mission. We have to restructure the Indian mission into a communion of three individual Churches.

So the Syro-Malabar Church's bygone All-India jurisdiction and autonomous status are to be restored. When this goal is achieved, it is up to this Church to make an earnest effort to formulate her own theology of evangelization best suited to India. In this effort she has to make use of her own Oriental heritage as well as the Indian identity. This theology of evangelization should be formulated in the form of a threefold dialogue: dialogue with the religions, dialogue with the cultures and dialogue with the poor of India.

The author is the Secretary of the Kerala Catholic Bishops' Council's Commission for Catechesis. He teaches Missiology and Catechetics at the Paurastya Vidyapitham, Vadavathoor, Kottayam.

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